



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES COLLEGE OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**The Dynamics of Social Contract and Revolution: A Critical
Assessment of the Right to Resistance from Ethiopia
Perspective, based on John Locke's Concept.**

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September 2024

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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By: ALI MEKONNEN FARIS

**A thesis submitted to the department of philosophy (graduate
program) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
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Approved by Board of Examiners

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Abstract

This thesis critically studies John Locke's concept of the right to revolution and its applicability to the Ethiopian context from 1974 to 2021. The thesis argues that while Locke's concept of the right to revolution provides a valuable framework for understanding resistance in Ethiopia, it is limited in its focus on individual rights and fails to fully capture the country's unique socio-political environment. Despite the fact that Locke's framework offers a valuable tool for understanding resistance and revolution in Ethiopia, it also presents limitations, particularly in its focus on individual rights. Positioning Locke within social contract theory, the thesis tries to see into his ideas of natural law, consent of the government and people, and conditions justifying revolution.

The study then applies Locke's framework to analyze the Ethiopian tradition of self-governance and natural rights, particularly during the Derg regime and the post-Derg EPRDF era. The thesis analysis highlights both the strengths and limitations of Locke's theory in understanding Ethiopian revolutions within the country's unique socio-political landscape, which emphasizes communal rights alongside individual freedoms.

Furthermore, the thesis addresses the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of resistance movements in Ethiopia. This includes examining criteria for just cause, ethical dilemmas faced during resistance movements, and the practical challenges of transitioning to a stable social order.

In conclusion, the thesis reevaluates the applicability of Locke's right to revolution in Ethiopia, emphasizing the need for a distinction understanding of resistance that incorporates the concept of communal rights. It proposes future research directions that integrate indigenous political philosophies and interdisciplinary approaches, offering valuable insights beyond the Ethiopian context.

Keywords: John Locke, right to revolution, social contract theory, Ethiopia, political philosophy, resistance, legitimacy, morality, effectiveness

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Introduction

In this research thesis, I try to discuss the ground on which the concept of John Locke's social contract, resistance, and revolution philosophical theory in the *Second Treatise of Government* (Lock 1698) in the context of my homeland, Ethiopia. I try to show the John Locke's theory, applicability, limitation complexities, and effectiveness within the Ethiopian context.

Based on John Locke's political theory reference, I argue that while John Locke's concept of the right to revolution offers a valuable framework for analyzing the Ethiopian context with the social contract, revolution, and resistance movements, it also has limitations and complexities concerning the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of such actions within the Ethiopian context. By examining the Derg regime, the post-Derg era (EPRDF period) and the contemporary resistance movement, this study demonstrates how Locke's ideas light up the causes and justifications for resistance movements in Ethiopia. However, it also states the complexities of the Ethiopian context, highlighting the limitations of a Western philosophical framework in fully capturing the understanding of Ethiopian political history and social movements.

According to (Hampton, 2018) the social contract theory, a cornerstone of political philosophy, proposes that individuals agree to submit their freedoms to a government in exchange for the protection and security of their fundamental rights, life, liberty, and property. This major concept and framework, continuously debated and developed by prominent thinkers like (Strauss, 2007), provides a lens for investigating the relationship between authority of power and individual rights. John Locke, a key political philosopher and figure in Western thought, constructed this concept. Locke argued that, a government's legitimacy comes from on the consent of the people, which is granted based on the protection of natural rights. However, Locke emphasized that when a government breaks up these rights and becomes oppressive and tyrannical, the people not only have the right, but also the responsibility, to fight and potentially overthrow it (Locke, 1698). Understanding the dynamics of social contracts and revolutions is therefore critical for analyzing the progress of political systems and the legitimacy of resistance movements. This concept, with its embedded right to resistance, justifies citizens challenging or overthrowing an authority that breaks the terms of the social contract.

This thesis tries to state, the applicability and limitations of John Locke's concept of the right to revolution, which emphasizes natural law, consent of the governed, and resistance against tyranny. I use this framework to understand the dynamics of social contract and resistance within the specific context of Ethiopia, focusing on the period from 1974 to 2021. Locke's framework offers a profound analytical tool for evaluating the Ethiopian social contract, revolution, and resistance movements. However, while Locke's ideas provide valuable insights and help identify the causes and conditions of resistance in Ethiopia, his idea also present certain limitations and complexities concerning the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of resistance movements within the Ethiopian context.

The main argument suggests that Locke's concept is not only universally applicable but also critically relevant to understanding and justifying the ongoing struggles for political reform and social justice in Ethiopia. By analyzing the Ethiopian context, this research sheds light on the strong relevance of Locke's theory of the social contract and the right to resistance in contemporary non-Western societies in Africa, Ethiopia.

Research Questions

In general, the research question guiding this thesis is based on Locke's concept of the right to revolution to be used as an analytical tool to understand the causes, justifications, and limitations of resistance movements within the Ethiopian context, particularly during the Derg regime (1974-1991) , the post-Derg era (EPRDF) and current resistant (1991-2021).

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do John Locke's theories on the social contract and the right to resistance align or diverge from the socio-political realities of Ethiopia?
2. In what ways can Locke's theory be adapted to better understand and address the unique challenges and dynamics of resistance in Ethiopia?
3. How can Locke's ideas inform the understanding of political legitimacy, resistance, and revolution in Ethiopia?

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on the period from 1974 to 2021, encompassing significant political changes and resistance movements in Ethiopia. This period includes the fall of the Derg regime (1974-1991), the succeeding rise of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and recent protests against the current government.

Research Methodology

This research primarily depend on on secondary sources, including academic books, journals, articles and credible websites that provide historical, philosophical, and empirical perspectives on the social contract, right to resistance, and the Ethiopian political background. The analysis integrates historical documentation with philosophical critique, employing Locke's theoretical framework as a lens through which to examine Ethiopian political developments and resistance movements.

The Social Contract and the Right to Resistance: A Global Context and its Relevance to Ethiopia

The social contract theory has been a foundation of political philosophy, shaping the progress of modern political systems worldwide. At its core, the theory suggests that individuals consent, either openly or indirectly, to submit certain freedoms in exchange for protection, security and the benefits of a governed society (A. R. M. Murray 1953). This shared understanding is the cornerstone of lawful government. Rebellion against tyranny is justified when the government breaks the social contract; this is when the right to resistance emerges. Locke's theories are especially important in Ethiopia because of the country's long history of fights for inherent rights and self-governance, which strongly align with the ideals of social contract theory (Laslett, P. 1988).

Theorists such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes contended that an individual, in a state of nature, surrender some freedoms to a sovereign power in exchange for security and the protection of their natural rights. Within this framework, the right to resistance emerges as a safeguard against tyranny and a violation of the social contract (O'Toole, W. 2011).

Despite having its roots in the West, the social contract theory's fundamental concepts are applicable to analyzing power relationships and resistance movements everywhere. Ethiopia is an interesting case study for examining the relevance of social contract because of its lengthy history of revolution and self-governance.

John Locke and the Right to Revolution

John Locke's political philosophy is focused on the concept of natural rights, which are inherent, absolute rights possessed by all individuals, including life, liberty, and property. According to Locke, a legitimate government exists primarily to protect these natural rights (Cole, Rosaile. 1968). When a government fails to fulfill this obligation and instead acts tyrannically, it is considered to have broken the social contract, thereby giving the people a right to resist.

Locke outlines specific justifications for revolution, including the violation of natural rights, the imposition of arbitrary laws, and the denial of due process. His emphasis on natural law, the consent of the governed, and the right to revolution provides a valuable framework for analyzing social contracts and resistance movements. However, Locke argued that legitimate governments originate their power from the consent of the people and their primary function is to protect people rights (Dunn, J. 1969). When these rights are violated and the government acts tyrannically, the people have the right to resist and even revolt to establish a new government that respects and maintains their rights.

Structure of the Thesis

To systematically address the complex social contract, revolution, and the right to resist in Ethiopia, I have arranged my philosophical thesis into four chapters. Each chapter builds upon the previous one, offering a layered analysis that explores the historical context, theoretical frameworks, and contemporary challenges. The research is structured into four chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Foundations of the Social Contract and Right to Resistance

- This chapter provides a historical foundation for the social contract theory, comparing the ideas of key thinkers like Hobbes and Rousseau with Locke's concept. It then explores

the relevance of the social contract tradition to Ethiopia, examining historical notions of governance and resistance within the country.

Chapter 2: John Locke's Political Philosophy and the Right to Revolution

- This chapter probes deeper into John Locke's political philosophy, focusing on his ideas of natural law, consent of the governed, and the justification for revolution. It analyzes the causes and conditions that, according to Locke, warrant resistance and revolution. Additionally, it discusses the limitations and challenges associated with his concept.

Chapter 3: The Ethiopian Social Contract and Historical Revolutions

- This chapter explores the Ethiopian social contract and historical revolutions. It examines the Ethiopian tradition of self-governance and inherent rights, focusing on specific periods like the Derg regime and the post-Derg era. The chapter will analyze how Locke's framework can be applied to understand the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, highlighting both its strengths and limitations. It will also assess how social contracts were formed, challenged, and renegotiated through resistance movements in Ethiopia.

Chapter 4: Legitimacy, Morality, and Effectiveness of Resistance in Ethiopia

- This chapter discusses the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of resistance in Ethiopia, highlighting unique considerations and ethical dilemmas. It will explore the complexities of resistance, focusing on identifying just causes, balancing uprising with public order, and navigating the challenges of establishing a new social order. This chapter will also address the unique considerations and ethical dilemmas that arise within the Ethiopian context.

Conclusion

- The conclusion summarizes the key findings, reflects on the research questions, and proposes areas for further study. It synthesizes the key findings of the research, revisits the research question and thesis statement, and offers insights into the ongoing relevance of the social contract and the right to resistance in contemporary Ethiopia..

By critically engaging with Locke's theories and applying them to the Ethiopian context, this thesis aims to provide a good understanding of political legitimacy, resistance, and revolution, contributing to the broader discourse on social contract theory and its relevance in contemporary non-Western societies. This research seeks to deepen the understanding of historical and ongoing struggles for political reform and social justice in Ethiopia. By critically examining Locke's concept of the right to revolution, this thesis investigation sheds light on the complexities of social contracts, offering insights into the dynamics of political change and resistance within the Ethiopian context.

Chapter One

1. Foundations of the Social Contract and Right to Resistance

The social contract theory has been a cornerstone in the development of modern political thought, shaping the conceptual framework of governance, legitimacy, and the rights of individuals within society. While its origins can be traced back to ancient philosophy, it gained prominence during the Enlightenment period through the works of key thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This chapter explores the foundations of social contract theory, with a particular focus on John Locke's perspective, to analyze its applicability to understanding the legitimacy of resistance movements in Ethiopia's historical and contemporary contexts.

The social contract theory posits that individuals, in a state of nature, consent to form a society and establish a government to protect their rights and ensure social order. This mutual agreement, whether explicit or implicit, forms the basis of legitimate political authority. The theory posits that the legitimacy of government rests on the consent of the governed, and any breach of this contract justifies resistance or rebellion (Mouritz, T. 2010).

However, the social contract theory is not without its limitations. Critics argue that it is overly simplistic in its portrayal of the state of nature and the formation of governments (Nyamaka 2011). Additionally, the concept of a universal social contract may not fully capture the diverse historical and cultural contexts in which governance and resistance movements emerge. Despite these limitations, the social contract tradition remains a valuable lens for analyzing political legitimacy, resistance, and revolution.

In the ancient world, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle touched upon ideas resembling social contracts, emphasizing the role of the state in ensuring justice and the common good. However, it was during the 17th and 18th centuries that social contract theory was rigorously articulated and became central to political discourse (Pojman, L. 2003). This chapter researches into the historical foundations of social contract theory, examining its evolution and the contributions of key thinkers who shaped social contract and its development.

1.1. The Comparative Perspectives on Social Contract Theory: Key Thinkers and their Concepts

The social contract theory, a foundational concept in political philosophy, was significantly advanced by the philosophical works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. At its core, the theory suggests that societies and governments derive their legitimacy from the consent of the governed (O'Toole, W. 2011). While each philosopher offered a unique interpretation of this fundamental principle, they all shared the belief that individuals voluntarily agree to form a social contract, surrendering certain freedoms in exchange for the benefits of collective living.

The social contract theory addresses the fundamental questions of how states and governments are formed and what the relationship should be between individuals and their governing bodies. It explores why people choose to create governments and what the respective roles of governments and citizens should be. Central to the theory is the assertion that political authority derives from the consent of the governed. This implies that people are the ultimate source of political power and that governments exist as a product of their agreement. As Nbeta (2012) and Olynyk (2010) emphasize, the social contract serves as the foundation for understanding the legitimacy of political authority.

All of these philosophers agreed on the foundational principle that human beings are naturally free and equal. They asserted that humans exist in a pre political state, often referred to as the state of nature, before forming political societies. While they differed in their interpretations of the state of nature and the reasons for leaving it, they all agreed that people voluntarily enter into a social contract to establish political authority. For the purposes of my thesis, I intend to focus on John Locke's social contract theory and the right of revolution, which is arguably the most influential in shaping the Ethiopian resistance, revolution, and government history.

1.1.1. Thomas Hobbes: social contract, unlimited power and Absolute Sovereignty

In his influential work *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes argued that the state of nature, a hypothetical condition before the formation of societies, was characterized by a chaotic and

violent state of war. To escape this anarchic state, individuals entered into a social contract, surrendering their natural rights to a powerful sovereign in exchange for peace and security. Hobbes believed that only an absolute monarch could maintain order and prevent the descent back into the state of nature.

According to Hobbes, human nature, marked by competition, distrust, and a desire for glory, made life in the state of nature precarious and harsh. To escape this condition, individuals sought a higher authority to provide guidance and ensure peace. In the state of nature, individuals were primarily motivated by self-interest, and moral concepts like good and evil were subjective. Hobbes argued that the sovereign's role was to establish objective standards of right and wrong, providing a moral framework for society (Hobbes, T. 1651). Moreover, Hobbes emphasized that human beings possess a fundamental fear of violent death and a desire to avoid pain. These universal passions, rooted in self-preservation, are the primary motivations for individuals to leave the state of nature and form a political society (Haworth 2012).

Hobbes argued that the law of nature, a set of principles designed to promote peace among individuals, provides the foundation for escaping the chaotic state of nature. The route to this escape is the social contract, a voluntary agreement among individuals to form a political society (Ryan 2006). Hobbes identified two types of contracts. The first, as outlined in the second law of nature, involves individuals renouncing their natural right to harm others without the authorization of a common power. This type of contract is ineffective without a governing authority to enforce it, as Hobbes famously stated, Covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all (Ryan 2006). The second type of contract involves individuals surrendering their natural rights to a single authority, the sovereign, who is responsible for ensuring the preservation of all members of the society. The sovereign acts as the enforcer of the social contract, ensuring that individuals adhere to its rules and regulations. Through this contract, individuals are obligated to obey the laws and authority of the sovereign.

The primary purpose of obedience to the sovereign is to overcome the hostile and insecure conditions of the state of nature. Hobbes believed that the social contract offered a means to escape this state and establish a stable political authority. Importantly, Hobbes emphasized that the sovereign, the ultimate power-maker and enforcer, does not necessarily refer to a single

individual. Instead, the sovereign could be a parliament or assembly, as long as it represents a unified and undivided political authority. Hobbes advocated for a strong, centralized government without the separation of powers. (Hobbes 1651).

Hobbes argued that by creating a common power or sovereign, individuals could enjoy collective protection from both foreign enemies and internal conflicts. This common power is established through the surrender of individual natural rights, except for the right of self-preservation, to a single person or a group of persons. This authority acts for the common good, ensuring peace and safety (Pojman 2003). This implies that individuals resign their personal will, judgment, and natural rights, including the right to liberty without limitation, to a single authorized entity. Hobbes described this surrender as follows: *I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that you give up your right to him and authorize all his action in like manner* (Leviathan (1651)).

The above concept explain that all individuals voluntarily submit their natural rights, for the purpose of for self-preservation, to the authorized authority. This authority acts as the executor of the individuals' collective will for self-defense. In this case, individuals delegate their rights to the common power, which in turn exercises its authority to secure the self-preservation of its citizens. Hobbes defined a commonwealth or state as the unification of individuals under a single authorized authority. He believed that only through this common power could conflicting interests be resolved and peace and security be established (Pojman 2003). This common authority emerges from the collective will of the individuals within the commonwealth.

The sovereign power, obtained from this collective will, confirms peace, harmony, and protection from external threats. Hobbes identified two primary ways in which sovereign power can be gained. The first, known as a commonwealth by gaining, occurs through involuntary submission, such as when children are subject to parental authority or a seized nation is governed by a foreign power. The second, known as a commonwealth by institution, arises through a voluntary agreement among individuals to surrender their rights for the sake of collective protection and preservation. (Murray 1953). The unlimited power of the 'sovereign' is a central belief of Hobbes's political philosophy. In the social contract, individuals transfer their natural

rights to a sovereign, which can be a single person or a group of people. When a commonwealth or state is established, the sovereign's power derives from the consent of the people.

The sovereign maintains control over people's decisions and behaviors, promoting harmony in society. The right to life, or the right to self-preservation, is the sole natural right that people do not give up to the sovereign, even when most other rights are granted to them. Hobbes believed that the law was only the sovereign's wish. For instance, the sovereign alone has the authority to grant the right to private property (Haworth 2012).

Hobbes argued that the sovereign should possess absolute power over the people for several reasons. He believed that once individuals have entered into a social contract, they are bound by its terms and cannot lawfully obey a new covenant unless the sovereign fails to protect their right of self-preservation. This implies that once individuals have surrendered their rights to a sovereign, it is illegitimate to overthrow the sovereign and transfer allegiance to another authority. Disobeying the sovereign is therefore unjust, and individuals who attempt to do so can be punished or even killed, as they are subject to the sovereign's authority. (Pojman 2003).

Another reason for the sovereign's absolute power lies in the absence of a contract between the sovereign and the individuals. The social contract is formed solely among the individuals, making them subjects of the sovereign. Since a contract requires an enforcer who is not a party to the contract, the sovereign cannot be involved in the contract itself. Hobbes argued that the sovereign could not enter into a contract with the whole group before its formation, as the group does not exist until after the contract. Additionally, if the sovereign made individual contracts with each person, these contracts would become void once the sovereign gains power due to the lack of agreed-upon principles regarding the sovereign's potential breach of contract. In such a scenario, individuals would be unable to hold the sovereign accountable for failing to ensure their self-preservation. Hobbes warned that this could lead to a return to the state of nature, where individuals must rely solely on their own strength and possessions for survival (Grcic 2007).

Hobbes stated that protesting against the sovereign is unjust because individuals are ultimately responsible for the sovereign's actions. As the creators of the sovereign's authority, individuals cannot hold the sovereign accountable for its actions. Complaining about the sovereign's actions

is equivalent to complaining about one's own actions and judgments. Therefore, accusing the sovereign is self-accusation.

Hobbes believed that in the state of nature, individuals had unrestricted rights, leading to a miserable existence. To ensure the safety and well-being of individuals, the sovereign must possess the sole authority to prescribe rules. This is essential for maintaining peace and security. (Mouritz, Thomas. 2010.). Hobbes argued that the sovereign should possess the power of the judiciary, including the authority to hear and resolve all disputes regarding civil and natural law. Without the sovereign's decisions, individuals would lack protection against one another, leading to a state of war. He believed that allowing individuals to protect themselves through private strength would contradict the purpose of the commonwealth (Haworth 2012).

The sovereign should also have the power to decide on matters of war and peace with other nations. This includes determining the necessity of war, the allocation of resources, and the appointment of officials. Hobbes emphasized that the sovereign power should not be divided. A separation of powers, with multiple dominant political authorities, would create political instability and tension (Hobbes 1651).

In general from the whole of this discussion of Hobbes social contract theory, A central theme in Hobbes's social contract theory is the tension between his belief in the inherently selfish nature of humans and their capacity for reason. Hobbes argued that the state of nature, a hypothetical condition before the formation of societies, is characterized by a state of war and insecurity due to human nature. Humans, driven by self-interest and competition, constantly strive to satisfy their desires, often leading to conflict.

However, Hobbes also recognized that humans possess reason, which allows them to choose the best course of action for their well-being. Through reason, humans seek to escape the insecure state of nature, either through peaceful means or by force, depending on what they perceive as advantageous. This rational pursuit of self-preservation leads to the discovery of the law of nature, a set of principles that guide individuals toward actions that promote their own survival. Hobbes emphasized that self-preservation is a fundamental human instinct, and the law of nature encourages individuals to seek peace and escape the miserable conditions of the state of nature.

The path to peace, according to Hobbes, is through a social contract among individuals (O'Toole, Winfred. 2011).

In my understanding and judgment Hobbes's concept of the sovereign raises intriguing questions about its nature. While he doesn't explicitly identify the sovereign as God, the sovereign's absolute power and lack of accountability suggest a divine-like quality. Unlike humans, who are often motivated by self-interest, the sovereign appears to be solely concerned with the well-being of its subjects. Hobbes describes the sovereign as a 'mortal God,' (Warburton 2006) highlighting its immense power over individuals, with the exception of the right of self-preservation. Unlike humans, who are bound by laws, the sovereign is not subject to any such constraints. The laws it enacts are merely tools to maintain the social contract, not limitations on its own authority. This suggests that the sovereign operates beyond the boundaries of traditional law.

While I have raised objections to certain aspects of Hobbes's social contract theory, I believe he is correct in asserting that consent is the foundation of political authority and the state. I also agree with his view that fear and the need for security are primary motivations for individuals to enter into a social contract. These issues are explored in more detail in my analysis of the competing views of Locke, and the legitimacy of social contract theory in explaining the emergence of government or state authority and revolution.

1.1.2. John Locke: Natural Rights and Government by Consent

In his *Second Treatises of Government* (1690), John Locke offered a more optimistic perspective on the state of nature, envisioning individuals as generally rational and cooperative. Locke argued that individuals possessed natural rights to life, liberty, and property, and that governments were established to protect these rights. Unlike Hobbes, Locke maintained that government authority was not absolute but conditional upon the fulfillment of its duty to protect these natural rights. If a government failed to uphold these rights, Locke argued that the people had the right to resist and overthrow it. I summarize it because I explained it further in the next chapter and sections.

1.1.3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Social Contract, The General Will and Popular Sovereignty

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his *The Social Contract* (1762), introduced the concept of the general will, representing the collective interests of the people. Rousseau believed that true political authority originates from the general will and that legitimate government must prioritize the common good over the interests of a ruling elite. His vision of a social contract emphasized direct democracy and popular sovereignty, advocating for a more egalitarian society. Rousseau's solution was a social contract based on the concept of the general will. This is not simply the will of the majority or the sum of individual wills, but rather the collective interest of the community as a whole. Through direct participation, individuals create laws that reflect the general will, ensuring everyone's freedom in society.

Rousseau's theory incorporates several key elements:

- **General Will:** The general will is not imposed by a ruler but arises from a shared commitment to the common good. It reconciles individual and communal interests.
- **Popular Sovereignty:** Sovereignty resides with the people as a whole, not a single ruler or a majority. Laws are created through direct participation, not by representatives.
- **Freedom as Obedience to the General Will:** True freedom, according to Rousseau, lies in obeying laws that reflect the general will, as these laws express our own will as part of the collective.

Rousseau's political theory, rooted in his understanding of human nature as naturally free yet often subjected, argues that the social contract aims to restore this natural freedom by addressing the temporary parental dependence within families and establishing a political system based on the general will (Rousseau 1762).

Rousseau drew a comparison between the family and a political society, with the father representing the ruler and the children symbolizing the people. He emphasized that all members of the family are born free and equal but willingly relinquish some of their liberty for mutual benefit. Children gain protection from the family, while the father receives love and

companionship. Rousseau argued that no individual possesses innate authority over another, implying that rulership is only legitimate through the consent of the governed. Therefore, any authority relationship, including within a family, is established by agreement. (Bennet 2010, A. Cress 1987).

Rousseau argued that humans in their natural state, characterized by solitude and primitiveness, were peaceful and content, unlike the conflicts and competition prevalent in civilized societies. This state of nature, free from political authority, transitioned into a more communal and settled lifestyle as humans began to live together and form families, eventually leading to the formation of societies. In their natural state, people were mentioned to by Rousseau as "savage man." (Labde 1972).

Rousseau stated that the introduction of private property, a consequence of societal formation, disrupted the peaceful and harmonious conditions of the state of nature. He described the resulting social inequality as follows: *The stronger did more productive work, the more adroit did better work, the more ingenious devised ways of abridging his labor; the farmer had greater need of iron or the smith greater need of wheat, and with both working equally, the one earned plenty while the other had hardly enough to live on. It is thus that natural inequality merges imperceptibly with inequality of ranks, and the differences between men, increased by differences of circumstance, make themselves more visible and more permanent in their effects, and begin to exercise a correspondingly large influence over the destiny of individuals* (Rousseau 1762).

Rousseau argued that a social contract is necessary to restore human freedom and address the injustices caused by private property and other social institutions. This contract aims to preserve the natural freedom that existed in the pure state of nature, a time before humans formed societies. (Haworth 2012). Rousseau believed that humans were initially solitary, good, and happy in the state of nature. However, the formation of society disrupted this harmonious state, leading to injustices. To address these issues, Rousseau advocated for a social contract that would protect individuals' rights and freedoms while preserving their natural liberty (A. Cress 1987).

In his statement, Rousseau stated that the social contract is a means to achieve freedom by addressing the challenges of the state of nature. Individuals surrender their individual rights to

the general will, a collective expression of the common good, in order to restore the natural freedom enjoyed in the early stages of their existence. (Canivez 2004) However he rejected the idea of resistance or revolution, because of natural rights should not be surrendered to any authority. He also emphasized that entering a social contract does not require individuals to surrender their absolute sovereignty; sovereignty is "indivisible and inalienable," meaning that the power to govern oneself should not be delegated to a single political authority. Instead, the sovereign power rests with the collective body of citizens. (C.R. Merriam. JR 2001)

In a society governed by the general will, each individual enjoys natural freedom. Decisions should be made collectively, considering all opinions and desires for the benefit of the entire community. The focus should be on the common good, not just the majority or individual interests. When considering laws or issues, individuals should determine if they align with the common good, prioritizing the collective over individual or majority interests. This ensures that everyone can enjoy their natural rights within the social contract (Haworth 2012, A. R. M Murray 1953, Stones 2013 and Carrthers 2008).

Based on Rousseau philosophical argument that each individual is an essential part of the sovereign body. He likened this concept to the natural authority an individual has over their own body, asserting that the social compact grants the body politic absolute power over its members. This implies that the rules and decisions established by the general assembly serve as the moral and legal standards for the entire community. Every individual actively participates in the exercise of the general will (Stone 2013).

1.2. Contributions and Criticisms

As I've already covered, the social contract theory provides a philosophical justification for the existence of governmental power. It explains why people submit to the authority of the state and outlines the reciprocal responsibilities between people and their government. In essence, the theory defines what people can expect from their government and what the government expects from them in return

To examine the necessity and purpose of government, scholars engage in a theoretical exploration of human existence prior to the establishment of political power. In other words, they

attempt to imagine a world without any form of political influence. To address these concerns, the aforementioned philosophers developed the social contract theory, which begins by examining human nature. They pursued to understand how people behaved before politics by analyzing their characteristics and actions. They refer to this pre-political state of humanity as the state of nature. Social contract philosophers strive to depict what it would be like for humans to live in this wild, untamed state, based on their observations of human nature.

Despite their varying analyses, social contract theorists agree that humans voluntarily transition from the state of nature to political society. They assert that the legitimacy of political power stems from the consent of individuals to escape the limitations and challenges of the state of nature. According to this theory, individuals obey governmental rule because they have agreed to that authority. Social contract theory is fundamentally concerned with the origin of state authority and the relationship between individuals and their government. Theorists of this concept of social contract believe that a government is legitimate only if it originates its power from the consent of the people. They conclude that there is no other source of government authority or obedience to government laws other than the consent among individuals.

In my humbled opinion, each philosopher's contributions to social contract theory have been both influential and subject to criticism. Hobbes' advocacy for absolute sovereignty is criticized for its potential to legitimize authoritarianism. Locke's emphasis on individual rights and limited government has been praised for its role in shaping liberal democracy, although it is sometimes viewed as overly optimistic about human nature. Rousseau's vision of direct democracy and the general will has inspired revolutionary movements but has also faced criticism for its potential to suppress individual freedoms in favor of collective decision-making.

Locke held a different perspective on human nature than Hobbes. Locke maintained that moral consents limit human freedom, even though he agreed that humans are fundamentally free and equal. The law of nature, which is a set of moral precepts, compels people to think for the welfare of other people. Locke noted a number of shortcomings with the rule of nature, despite the fact that it offers a natural guidance. These included the absence of a common judge, common criteria for the law of nature, and an unbiased interpreter.

Locke argued that the limitations of the law of nature necessitate the formation of a government. The government should have limited power and be established through the consent of the people. Laws should be adopted based on the will of the majority. Locke believed that unlimited and absolute government is incompatible with the natural freedom and equality of individuals (Dietrich, Frank. 2014). If the government fails to fulfill its duties, the people have the right to revolt. Locke stated that maintaining the social contract requires the right to resistance. He maintained that the people had the right and the obligation to rebel against and overthrow a government that is dictatorial or fails to defend the people's basic rights.

This comparative analysis highlights how each philosopher views contribute to understanding Locke's perspective, particularly his balance between individual rights and the need for a legitimate, consensual government. Locke's conceptualization of the right to resistance is particularly relevant to my study, as it provides a strong framework for analyzing the legitimacy of resistance movements in Ethiopia. His statement on the government's accountability to the governed and the conditional nature of political authority offers a compelling lens through which to view Ethiopian struggles for revolution and resistance.

John Locke's emphasis on the right to resistance based on governmental accountability to the people offers a valuable lens for understanding Ethiopian struggles for political reform and social justice. By examining Locke's ideas, we can analyze how they apply to the historical and contemporary contexts of resistance movements in Ethiopia.

To sum up the above discussion, for my thesis purpose, the right to resistance is a crucial component of social contract theory, particularly in the works of John Locke. The concept is central to Locke's justification for revolutions against tyranny, such as in my case the revolution from 1971 to 2021 happens in Ethiopia. Because Locke argued that when a government fails to protect natural rights or becomes tyrannical, the people have the right and the duty to resist and overthrow it.

1.3. The Right to Resistance within Social Contract: Relevance of Locke's Theory to Ethiopian Context

Having analyzed the major social contract philosophers and theorists, I've selected John Locke's theory of social contract and resistance for my in-depth discussion. Locke's ideas resonate particularly well with the Ethiopian socio-political landscape due to their emphasis on **governmental accountability, the right to revolution, and a philosophical foundation and Justification for resistance**. These concepts provide a compelling framework for understanding and addressing the complexities of Ethiopian context.

1.3.1. Why John Locke?

1. Concept of Government Accountability:

According to John Locke, the government's legitimacy is based on its obligation to defend the unalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. Citizens have the right to rebel against and overturn a government that does not fulfill these duties (Hurtibise, Francis. 1952.)

I argue that, in the Ethiopia context, Locke's theory of the right to resistance and revolution for tyrannical government resonates with the historical and contemporary experiences of Ethiopia. When governments in Ethiopia have failed to keep the rights of their people, resistance and revolution movements have often emerged, exactly stated from Locke's principles of social contract. This alignment highlights the relevance of Locke's ideas in understanding the legitimacy of Ethiopian resistance and revolution movements.

2. Right to Revolution:

For me, one of the most convincing reasons for selecting Locke is his encouragement for the right to revolution. Locke argues that when a government breaches the social contract by violating the people's fundamental rights, the governed not only have a right but a duty to resist and overthrow such a government. This principle is directly applicable to Ethiopia's resistance movements, in Ethiopia from the 1974 revolution to the contemporary Oromo protests, where popular uprisings required removing regimes that were perceived to have failed the people (Tronvoll, K. 2019).

Locke's emphasis on **natural rights** and **governmental overreach** as justifications for resistance provides a more explicit philosophical foundation for understanding Ethiopian uprisings. His unequivocal support for the **right to revolution** offers a compelling lens through which to examine Ethiopia's history of resistance movements, where citizens have repeatedly challenged oppressive regimes.

3. Philosophical Justification for Resistance:

John Locke provides a strong moral and philosophical justification for resistance, based on his theory of natural rights and the nature of government. Central to Locke's argument is the foundation that individuals have inherent natural rights to life, liberty, and property. These are absolute rights that come with being human and are not granted by the state. Therefore, defending these rights is the primary responsibility of any legitimate government.

When a government violates this social contract either by failing to protect the natural rights of its people or by actively invading upon them, it fundamentally breaches the social contract. According to Locke, such a breach justifies the people's right to resist and even overthrow the government. The moral basis for this resistance stems from the government's unfaithfulness to the very purpose for which it was created. Resistance, in this sense, is not just a right but a duty, as the people must act to restore justice and protect their rights from further destruction.

Locke strongly links the idea of popular power to his defense of resistance. Political authority ultimately comes from the people, and the legitimacy of the government is predicated on their approval (Locke 1690). The people are not required to submit to a ruler or governing body that is tyrannical and stops acting in their best interests. Instead, they have every moral right to overthrow the current administration and install a new one that better promotes their interests as a people.

Finally, Locke's theory stands out because it aligns with key issues in Ethiopian political history: government accountability, the right to resist tyranny, and the moral grounds for revolution. Locke's framework provides a more practical and ethically grounded model for analyzing Ethiopia's ongoing pursuit of justice and a functioning social contract, making it central to my discussion.

1.3.1.1. Applicability to Ethiopian History and Politics

1. Historical Instances of Resistance:

John Locke's philosophical framework, particularly his concept of the right to resistance, offers a valuable lens through which to understand key moments in Ethiopian history. The 1974 revolution that deposed Emperor Haile Selassie (Vivo, R.V. 1978), the resistance against the Derg regime, and the more recent protests against the EPRDF government all demonstrate the people's rejection of oppressive rule when their natural rights life, liberty, and property were compromised. Locke's theory, which emphasizes the dissolution of government when it breaches its social contract, aligns with these instances of popular uprising, underscoring the relevance of his ideas in understanding Ethiopia's cycles of resistance

2. Ethnic and Political Diversity:

Locke's focus on individual rights and the consent of the governed can also be adapted to Ethiopia's complex ethnic and political background. Based on his theory, in a country characterized by diverse ethnic groups with distinct historical grievances and tyrannical government, the principles of Locke's social contract theory especially his argument for government legitimacy being expressed in the people's consent can be expanded to reflect not just individual rights but also communal rights. Ethiopia's resistance movements often emerge from the perceived marginalization of ethnic groups (Merera, 2003), and Locke's ideas about government accountability and the right to resistance provide a conceptual basis for understanding these multifaceted struggles for justice and self-determination.

1.3.1.2. Theoretical Strengths of Locke's Approach

1. Clarity and Practicality:

Locke's theory offers a clear framework for determining when it is appropriate to resist an authority. His criteria, in particular the violation of natural rights life, liberty, and property allow his theory to be immediately applied to actual circumstances, such as those that occurred in Ethiopian history. Locke's method provides useful assistance for comprehending the rationale

behind resistance movements, such those against the Derg or EPRDF governments, by outlining precise criteria for when a government loses legitimacy.

2. Focus on Natural Rights:

Locke's focus on natural rights is highly compatible with the objectives of numerous resistance movements in Ethiopia. Locke's emphasis on the fundamental rights of individuals is echoed in the fights to preserve and restore individual freedoms, especially in the face of authoritarian regimes. Whether it is the demand for individual liberty during the revolution against Haile Selassie or the defense of political and civil rights during demonstrations against more recent governments, his thought is in line with the goals of Ethiopian resistance movements.

Locke's focus on natural rights and the conditions under which government authority can be legitimately resisted offers a clear theoretical framework for understanding the dynamics of political struggle in Ethiopia. This makes his resistance and revolution approach not only theoretically strong but also deeply relevant to Ethiopia's diverse and complex political landscape.

Ethiopians, like people everywhere, have the right to expect their government to uphold the social contract. If that contract is broken, Locke's theory suggests they have the right to demand change or even seek to replace the government. However, such actions should be a last resort, following peaceful avenues of dissent and reform. Locke's emphasis on government accountability, natural rights, and the clear right to revolution offers a complete and applicable approach for understanding and justifying the historical and contemporary struggles for political reform and social justice in Ethiopia.

1.3.2. Pre-1974 Governance and Resistance: A Philosophical Perspective

Emperor Haile Selassie, whose lengthy reign as a monarch reflected a complicated blend of modernization attempts and the maintenance of traditional structures of authority, ruled Ethiopia until the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution (Keller, E. J. 1988). Many people give Haile Selassie credit for attempting to modernize Ethiopia politically and economically, particularly with measures meant to strengthen Ethiopia's position internationally and centralize power. Among his

accomplishments were the creation of a cutting-edge educational system, initiatives for land reform, and a proactive position on the international scene.

However, despite these modernizing reforms, deep frustration faced under the surface of Haile Selassie's regime. The emperor's governance was largely characterized by a concentration of power and fully addresses the economic and political needs of the majority population. Growing unrest was a result of both political repression and the continuation of economic inequality. Furthermore, regional tensions were heightened by Haile Selassie's inadequate response to the aspirations and grievances of Ethiopia's different ethnic groups (Ottaway, M. 1978). This division was widened by the marginalization of different ethnic groups and the consolidation of wealth and power in the hands of the ruling elite.

The resistance and revolution movement during the Haile Selassie's government manifested multiple forms, reflecting a broad spectrum of dissatisfaction. The Ethiopian student movement, which gained momentum in the 1960s and early 1970s, became a prominent force of resistance. Students demonstrated against the autocracy of the monarchy and demanded increased social fairness, economic reform, and political involvement. Worker and teacher strikes, in particular, highlighted the growing call for fundamental change (Andargachew Tiruneh. 1990).

The philosophical foundations of this resistance can be linked to the broader concept of the social contract, where the legitimacy of a government is conditional upon its capacity to serve the needs of its citizen. As a result, the social contract between Haile Selassie and the Ethiopian people began to fight as the emperor's failure to address these extensive grievances became increasingly evident. Economic hardships, political exclusion, and social inequalities contributing to the rising belief that Haile Selassie had lost his legitimacy.

The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, which culminated in the emperor's overthrow, marks a fundamental moment in resistance narrative. It stands as a main example of the Ethiopian people's tendency to challenge rulers who are perceived to have violated the social contract (Andargachew Tiruneh. 1990). The revolution was not just a reaction to economic and political grievances but also represented a deeper philosophical shift an assertion of the people's right to resist unfair authority. Throughout Ethiopian history, the revolution of governments has often occurred when the people believed their government violated the social contract a core concept

in political philosophy. The 1974 revolution, which led to the collapse of Emperor Haile Selassie, demonstrates this dynamic.

As I have discussed, the time period up to the 1974 revolution was characterized by increasing frustration with Emperor Haile Selassie's governance, rooted in economic inequalities, and political repression. The resistance movements that emerged during that time were driven by demands for greater political participation and social justice. The emperor's final overthrow is consistent with Ethiopia's larger historical shape, which has seen regimes collapsed when it is thought they have broken the social contract with the population.

1.3.3. The Derg Regime and Post-Derg Era Resistance and Social Contract Violations

Following the revolution, the Derg regime came to power and presented itself as the socialist backer of equality and social justice, claiming to speak for the interests of the people. However, rather than keeping the social contract, the Derg's reign was characterized by extensive violations of human rights, and totalitarianism. The revolution's goals of increased fairness, democracy, and wealth did not meet. Rather, in order to stay in power, the regime used force and repression, which created strong opposition movement in Ethiopia (Andargachew Tiruneh 1990).

In Ethiopia, many resistance movements opposed the Derg regime in different ways each with a different vision for Ethiopia either redefining or restoring the social contract. Under the Derg, the social contract understood in Locke's terms as a mutual agreement between the governed and the governing was thoroughly broken. Instead of fulfilling its obligation to protect the rights and well-being of the people, the Derg regime used brutal force to maintain its control on power, leading to the emergence of strong resistance movements across Ethiopia(Gilkes, P. (1975).

The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), two armed movements, were involved in opposing the Derg's centralized government. These movements were motivated by the belief that the regime had ignored its duty to rule justly and had invaded the people's fundamental human rights.

After many years of military struggle and resistance, the Derg dictatorship regim finally fell in 1991, showing in the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) era. In an effort to backing the social contract, the EPRDF encouraged political reform. However, the

challenges of governance continued, with issues of political freedom, human rights abuses, and restrictions on democratic participation continuing to damage the political landscape.

The repeated of resistance in both the Derg and post-Derg eras is a reflection of the ongoing struggle to create a government that respects the social contract, one that promises individual rights protection and permits meaningful political participation in addition to security and stability. The uprisings against these governments gave rise to resistance movements, which brought attention to the continuous conflict between the powers that be and the people's aspirations for equality, justice, and democratic government.

The resistance movement that persisted during the Derg and post-Derg eras is indicative of the continuous endeavor to create a government that genuinely maintains the social compact. Resistance movements in Ethiopia have consistently highlighted the tension between authoritarian rule and the people's aspirations for a government that respects individual rights, ensures political participation, and balances security with justice. The resistance against these regimes emphasizes the continuous conflict between oppressive power structures and the people's enduring quest for equality, justice, and democratic governance.

1.3.4. The 2018 Ethiopian Protests through Locke's Right to Resist

The 2018 Ethiopian protests, which led to the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and ushered in the reformist leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, can be effectively analyzed through John Locke's concept of the right to resist unjust authority. According to Locke, a government derives its legitimacy from the consent of the governed and its adherence to the social contract. When a government fails to protect the natural rights of the people namely life, liberty, and property the people are morally justified in resisting that government to restore justice and freedom.

In Ethiopia, the protests were primarily driven by the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups, who expressed long-standing grievances against the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). These grievances included political exclusion, economic marginalization, and ethnic discrimination, which Locke would interpret as clear violations of the social contract. Locke argued that a government that no longer represents the interests and rights of the majority

forfeits its legitimacy, and the people, as sovereign actors, have a right to resist such a government.

The Ethiopian protests align closely with Locke's criteria for legitimate resistance. First, they represented a broad based movement of people seeking the restoration of their rights. The call for greater democracy, justice, and equality reflects Locke's principle that the people have the right to demand governance that reflects their interests and protects their freedoms. Second, the protests were largely peaceful, which Locke emphasized as a critical aspect of legitimate resistance. Violence, according to Locke, should only be a last resort, justified only when peaceful means fail to restore the social contract (Locke 1690).

Moreover, the Ethiopian protests sought not only the removal of an oppressive government but also a restructuring of the political order to better reflect the will of the people. This is consistent with Locke's notion of resistance as a means to restore the social contract. The protestors did not seek anarchy but rather the establishment of a new political system that would uphold the principles of equality, justice, and participation core elements of Locke's political philosophy.

The eventual resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and the ascension of Abiy Ahmed, who initiated a series of political and economic reforms, can be seen as the culmination of a successful Lockean resistance. Abiy's reforms, which included releasing political prisoners, opening up political space, and promoting national reconciliation, represent an attempt to rebuild the social contract that had been violated under the EPRDF (Mulugeta, D. 2020). . Locke's theory posits that successful resistance leads to the creation of a new government that better protects the rights of the people, and in this case, the Ethiopian protests achieved a significant shift toward political reform and a reaffirmation of the social contract between the Ethiopian people and the government.

Generally speaking, the 2018 Ethiopian protests can be viewed through Locke's right to resist as a legitimate response to a government that had failed to uphold the social contract. The movement sought to correct the imbalances of power and restore the rights and freedoms of the people, reflecting Locke's enduring relevance in understanding the dynamics of resistance and political change.

John Locke's theory of resistance requires certain conditions: 1) resistance must aim to restore the social contract and just governance, and 2) it should be peaceful and legal. The 2018 Ethiopian protests largely met these criteria, seeking to reform the government and ensure it serves the common good. However, the government's violent response to the protests highlights the inherent complexities of resistance movements, where peaceful actions can sometimes lead to unintended violence.

But the post-protest phase has also brought attention to the obstacles and problems faced by resistance movements. Even though Abiy first promised democracy and inclusivity, his administration has continued to struggle with concerns of political instability, ethnic violence, and governance. Overall, the 2018 protests demonstrate Locke's right to meaningful opposition in the modern day, but they also highlight how challenging it is to properly implement the philosophical goals of reform and resistance in a complicated and divided country like Ethiopia.

While the above scenarios highlight the relevance of Locke's right to resist in modern and contemporary Ethiopia, as I explain the social contract and revolution, applying his philosophical concept is challenging and difficult. However, complexities arise when considering the following:

- **Defining Tyranny:** Locke himself have straggled with the difficulty of defining tyranny. In his framework, tyranny is essentially the abuse of power, particularly when a government fails to protect the natural rights of its people. However, in the Ethiopian context, determining what constitutes a clear violation of the social contract that justifies resistance remains a matter of understanding, interpretation and debate. Varying perceptions of what qualifies as oppressive governance complicate the process of defining when legitimate resistance should occur. The diverse ethnic, cultural, and political perspectives in Ethiopia complicate the process of defining when legitimate resistance should occur, as perceptions of oppressive governance can vary significantly.
- **Centralized Authority vs. Local Power Dynamics:** Locke's theory primarily focuses on resistance against a central government that overreaches its authority. However, Ethiopia's political history is deeply shaped and manifest by tensions between centralized authority and local power structures (Markakis, 1998 and Zewde, 2001). Ethiopia is a

country with diverse ethnic groups, each with its own power dynamics, histories of resistance, and varying relationships to the central government. John Locke's framework, which sees a more uniform social contract between a sovereign and its subjects, may need to be adapted to account for these complexities. The localized grievances and power struggles that exist in Ethiopia where local authorities and communities often resist central policies introduce another layer of complexity that Locke's theory may not fully apply and compatible. Here, resistance may not only be aimed at the central authority but also at other forms of local or regional power.

These difficulties show that applying Locke's social contract and resistance theory to Ethiopia requires a systematic approach. Locke's theories provide a strong basis for understanding the ethical and philosophical arguments for resistance, but the Ethiopian situation shows that these theories must be modified to take into account the unique historical, social, and political circumstances of the nation.

To finalize the total concepts of this chapter, the period from 1974 to 2021 covers significant events of resistance and revolution, reflecting the ongoing struggle for a legitimate and just political order in Ethiopia. The social contract concept provides a valuable framework for analyzing these historical developments, particularly in light of Locke's theories on government accountability and the right to resistance. By examining the historical and philosophical foundations of the social contract and the right to resistance, I believed that the above chapter provided for a profounder analysis of Locke's political philosophy and its applicability to the Ethiopian context.

Chapter Two

2. John Locke's Political Philosophy and the Right to Revolution

I argue that many of the fundamental principles underlying Ethiopia's social contract resistance and revolution movements are linked and have some relation within John Locke's philosophical theory. The following section explores Locke's philosophy in detail.

Locke hypothesizes that all individuals are inherently equal and have absolute natural rights, including the rights to life, liberty, and property. These rights lead individuals to form a social contract. Locke's political philosophy, particularly his concept of the **right to revolution**, offers a powerful analytical framework for understanding the dynamics of political legitimacy and resistance in Ethiopia.

The following sections explore into the core aspects of Locke's thought, including the foundations of **natural law** and **consent**, the criteria for **legitimate government**, the causes and conditions justifying **revolution**, and the **limitations** and **challenges** of applying Locke's theory, especially in non-Western contexts like Ethiopia.

2.1. The Right to Resist: Why Just Governments Exist Through Consent and Natural Law

The political chaos of 17th-century England, marked by the Civil War and the unprecedented execution of King Charles I, witnessed a philosophical revolution and political authority and legitimacy. At the heart of this intellectual revolution, John Locke whose philosophy offered a critical break from the dominant doctrine of the divine right of kings. This doctrine, long used to justify absolute monarchical power by claiming that kings ruled by divine order, became increasingly invalid in the face of the political instability and challenges to royal authority (Laslett, 1988). John Locke's answer to these disorders would lay the foundation for modern political philosophy, particularly through his expression of the right to resist unfair governments.

Locke rejected the notion that kings originate their authority from God, arguing instead that legitimate governments must be based on the consent of the governed. His idea is radical departure from the divine right theory, which held that the monarch was responsible only to God

and not to the people. In John Locke's view, political authority is not an inherent right of rulers but a trust consulted upon them by the people they govern. The spirit of this trust is summarized in the social contract that is a mutual agreement between the rulers and the people, where government is introduced to protect the natural rights of individuals, particularly life, liberty, and property (Dunn, 1969).

For John Locke, the consent of the governed is not just a theoretical construct but the fundamental source of a government's legitimacy. In his model, individuals in the state of nature have natural rights, and they voluntarily enter into a social contract to form a government that will protect these rights. If a government fails to fulfill this obligation and if it becomes tyrannical, violates natural rights, or breaches the social contract, it automatically loses its legitimacy. In such cases, Locke argues, the people not only have the right but the responsibility to resist and replace the government (Locke, 1698).

To sum up this idea, John Locke's rejection of the divine right of kings and his insistence that legitimate governments are founded on the consent of the governed marked a revolutionary shift in the political thought of the 17th century. By the foundation of political authority in natural law and the will of the people, Locke offer a powerful philosophical justification for the right to resist unjust rulers, a concept that continues to resonate in contemporary discussions of democracy, human rights, and political legitimacy.

2.1.1. Why Governments Exist?

In order to facilitate a better understanding, let me begin by outlining Locke's theory of the purpose of governments. This discussion is crucial because it lays out what the government's role should be, how best to design it to fulfill that role, and, in the event that the government fails to perform its intended function, what the importance of a popular revolution to overthrow it.

In John Locke's philosophy, the idea of a "state of nature" that means, a pre-political setting in which people live in complete equality and freedom is central concept. People in this state have basic, absolute rights, including the rights to life, liberty, and property (Locke, 1690). These rights are inherent to human nature itself and are not taken by any outside authority.

However, there are difficulties in this state of nature as well. Insecurity results from the lack of a central authority to maintain these rights and arbitrate conflicts. Locke's ideas are based on a very sound logic. According to his theory, people can enhance their well-being by abandoning some of their inherent liberties to a government, and they will endure numerous inconveniences in the ungoverned state of nature. Locke therefore argues that the purpose of government is to make up for these shortcomings in the natural order.

To illustrate more, John Locke argues that, in human state of nature, individuals are free and equal, having the natural rights to life, liberty, and property. On the other hand, the state of nature is also troubled with uncertainties and potential conflicts, as there is no established authority to enforce the natural law. Through a social contract, people come to an agreement to create a society and a government in order to get out of this situation. According to (Locke 1698), this contract entails the agreement of the governed, where people surrender some rights to the state in return for the defense of their essential liberties.

The hypothetical state of nature is important to social contract theory because it symbolizes what life would be like without legitimate government and why it is preferable to surrender certain rights to enter into a social contract than to continue in the state of nature. The concept of a state of nature thus serves as a basis for explaining why government exists and what the functions of government should be. Locke states that in (Locke 1690). we must take into consideration the natural state of all persons in order to comprehend political power and determine whence it originated.

In Locke's state of nature, when people are totally free to act without limitation from others, there is still a distinction between positive and negative freedoms. Locke claims that while "everyone is equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions," nature is "a state a liberty, yet is it not a state of license." This implies that although humans are free to act however they like, their freedom is limited by the rules of nature. (Locke 1690). People are obligatory to defend themselves, and they are not permitted to invade upon the "life, the liberty, and property" of another individual.

It is important that people must punish those who break up fundamental rights when they are committed. "Every man hath a right to punish the offender, and be executioner of the law of

nature," according to Locke. (Locke 1690). John Lock considers individuals who violate the natural law to be like "wild savage beasts, with which men can have no society or security" and that they have "declared war against all mankind." (Locke 1690). Locke even goes so far as to say that since natural law demands it, everyone must be an executioner in their natural state. People who disobey the laws of nature must pay a price.

In addition, people have an innate bias toward their friends and selves. When everyone possesses the executive power of the natural law, people's desire for vengeance will lead them to punish others excessively and their partiality will make them bad judges of both themselves and their friends. Locke contends that "government has undoubtedly been appointed by God to restrain the partiality and violence of men," and that "nothing but confusion and disorder will follow." (Locke 1690) Locke does not believe that nature is a bad place, but it is full of injustice and inconveniences.

Locke stated that everybody in the state of nature own two difference powers. The first power is, there is power for individual to do whatsoever he believes and wants is good for the defense of him, within the restrictions set by the law of nature. The second power is, there is the power to punish crimes that are committed in contradiction of the law of nature (Locke 1690). People give up their first power to submit to the laws made by the government. In return for equal protection and impartiality in government, this limits one's freedom. Additionally, people give up their ability to punish individuals who disobey natural laws. Therefore, in order to obtain security for their lives, liberty, and estates, people must give up many of the natural rights they enjoyed in the state of nature in order to work for government. (Locke 1690.)

Moreover, property rights have a significant role in the natural world. Locke argued that God has given humanity "reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life, and convenience," and that humans share common ownership of the world. (Locke 1690.) Locke states that "the earth, and all that is therein, is given to men for the support and comfort of their being." He also stated that, individual has an natural right to life and, as such, the right to appropriate for himself whatever is necessary to preserve and improve that life. According to Locke, humanity owns the entire planet, but as no one had private sovereignty over it at first, ownership had to be acquired by actions taken by humans.

Because one owns what they have worked on, labor is the solution to this problem. "The labor of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his," according to Locke. Then, he has joined his labor to whatever he has taken from the state nature has given and left it in, creating it distinctively his own, fusing his labor with something original. (Locke 1690) This idea also applies to those who own land. A person has the right to the land that he works hard to improve. Therefore, even though God gave man the earth in common, a person acquires ownership of a piece of land via his labors. Regardless of other people's assent, this is true. (Locke 1690)

Locke imposes a number of natural restrictions on the quantity of property that can be owned. Additionally, he states that, since the world was given to all of humanity in common, each individual may only acquire as much property as will let others to likewise collect their own property. Finally, one may only collect what they also combine with their own labor. But according to John Locke, the introduction of money which never cures and always makes more possible for others allows people to overcome the first two restrictions. Put differently, people have an innate right to possess an infinite amount of personal belongings.

People naturally want to acquire more property than they require, and as long as none of that stuff loots, this is morally acceptable, based on John Lock (lock 1698). Furthermore, people are logical enough to understand that they must make contracts in order to satiate their want for greater property, but because of their nature, they will ignore these commitments unless there is a higher authority in place to enforce them. Hence, despite Locke's belief that nature is essentially a cooperative and supportive environment and that humans are inherently sociable, some people will continue to break the laws of nature.

According to John Locke, people make a social contract in order to protect their natural rights and go over the constraints of the state of nature. This agreement, which is intended to be a deliberate act, entails the purposeful surrender of certain liberties in return for the advantages of a law-abiding community. Furthermore, people consent to abide by a body of laws enacted by a government they created. Therefore, the protection of the natural rights that citizens commit to the government comes first and is the basis for the government's legitimacy, which is derived from this act of consent. Locke's theory differs from that of his opponents, including Thomas

Hobbes, who thought that absolute authority held by the sovereign was necessary for the existence of order (Macpherson, 1962).

2.1.2. How the Government should operate

Locke's beliefs about the nature of property and the state of nature lead him to conclude that governments are necessary. According to Locke, a person has the right to hold property as long as they don't take more than they can use or cause injury to another person while doing so. However, immoral people will break these natural principles and cause damage to other people's property under the state of nature (John Lock 1690).

So, as a means of resolving this problem with the state of nature, people may come together and make agreement to the creation of a government that has the power to create and enforce laws, thereby assuring each member of that society security in their life, liberty, and property. (John Lock 1690). By granting the capacity to punish or judge crimes, a civil society may establish a government that can impartially and efficiently protect an individual's rights better than that person could do alone. John Locke states that, "Where-ever therefore any number of men are so united into one society, as to quit everyone his executive power of the law of nature and to resign it to the public there and there only is a political, or civil society."

According to Locke, there are numerous things the government may do to address the issues with the natural state. First, he thinks that the government needs to provide a well-established legal system that serves as a yardstick for morality and as a means of resolving disputes. (Lock 1690). Second, he thinks that governments ought to provide a recognized, impartial judge with the authority to resolve conflicts in accordance with established law. Since people are selective and prejudiced due to their own interests, they are not suitable to be judges, even if the condition of nature permits all men to serve as judges and enforcers of the natural law.

The government can also offer an unbiased judge to assist in securing people's property. According to John Locke, the inconveniences caused by the inconsistent and unpredictable use of the power that each man has to punish the wrongdoings of others force them to seek refuge under the established laws of the land and to preserve their possessions. Third, a government can

provide the necessary assistance and capacity to ensure that the punishment is carried out according to due process; the state of nature cannot do so.

John Locke's social contract framework is based on the fundamental premise of consent. The best agreement of the people is the source of legitimate political authority, and the government's main responsibility is to protect its citizens' natural rights. This agreement-based framework for government highlights the duty of rulers to the ruled and establishes the foundation for resistance in the event that the government is unable to fulfill its obligations. He also believed that, the legitimacy of a government is depending upon its obedience to the philosophies of natural law and its success of the social contract. A legitimate government is arises its authority from the consent of the governed and is committed to the protection of their natural rights. (Locke, 1698).

Locke defines four parameters or limits to a government's legislative power. The first limit is that while the legislative power must be absolute, it cannot be arbitrary. He argues that this power is derived from the combined authority of all individuals in society and cannot exceed the power they possessed in the state of nature. According to Locke, no one has complete arbitrary power over themselves or others, even within a civil society. Individuals are limited by the laws of nature, which exist to protect themselves and humanity as a whole. He also argues that individuals can only give up their power to the government for the purpose of protecting their propertis.(John Lock 1690). This indicates that, the government's legislative power must be applied for the public good and services, not arbitrarily.

Locke's second limit to government legislative power is that it must dispense justice impartially and according to established laws. Laws must apply equally to everyone. He argues that the purpose of forming a government is to avoid the uncertainties of the state of nature, but partial or arbitrary rule undermines this goal. A government without clear and universally understood laws is contrary to the interests of both society and the state

Locke's third limit to government legislative power is that it cannot take property from individuals without their consent. This is a natural consequence of his belief that the purpose of government is to defend property, which encompasses life, liberty, and estate. Therefore, the government must protect people's property and refrain from taking it without their permission. Finally, Locke argues that the legislative cannot transfer the power of making laws to any other

third person. He argues that the power of making laws is a delegated power from the people, so it cannot be shifted or transferred in the others. Only the people have the right to transfer governmental powers to another body.

To sum up the idea, a government that respects the listed rights and operates within the bounds of law maintains its legitimacy. While the legislative power is supreme, it is still limited to safeguarding individual properties. If the government acts against the trust of the people, they have the right to eliminate or change the legislature. When a government becomes tyrannical, violates natural rights, or acts against the common good, it breaks the social contract. In such circumstances, the people are justified in resisting and overthrowing the government. Locke grounds the right to resistance in natural law, viewing it as a natural extension of the right to self-defense. Therefore, Locke's justification for resistance is based on the conditional nature of political authority.

2.2. Causes and Conditions of Revolution: Tyranny and Abuse of Power in Locke's Theory

As I discussed early, the main objectives of the government, as per Locke presents, is to secure natural rights like life, liberty, and property. His whole argument is why people leave the state of nature and consent to a government is for the security and safety of their properties, lives, and liberties. If a government fails to fulfill its fundamental responsibility of protecting citizens' rights, people are no longer safe with their property and lives. They are essentially returned to the state of nature, where their lives are plagued by inconvenience and insecurity. In such cases, people are justified in overthrowing the existing government and establishing a new one capable of protecting their property. The government's power is limited and must operate within the framework of recognized and rational laws, with the goal of promoting peace, safety, and the public good

The right to resist emerges from the social contract. According to Locke, a government loses legitimacy if it consistently threatens or interferes with its citizens' natural rights, violating the social contract. A despotic government that takes away someone's life, liberty, or property without cause breaks the social contract, creating the conditions for resistance. While the right to resist is not to be taken lightly, it is a last resort to protect fundamental rights from a tyrannical

government. Locke argues that a government that fails to uphold citizens' natural rights loses its legitimacy, violating the social contract. Such a government liberates people from their original consent and loses its ability to rule. Locke's philosophy provides a foundation for defending resistance, as people have the right to regain their original liberties when a government breaches their fundamental rights. Resistance, in this sense, is not about overthrowing the government as a whole but about establishing a legitimate and rightful one.

John Locke's theory of the right to resist serves as a crucial safeguard against government abuse. This right empowers citizens to take action, even revolution, when a government fails to fulfill its obligations or acts tyrannically. This radical concept became a cornerstone of democratic thought. By upholding the right to resist, Locke authorized populations to hold their governments accountable for protecting the social contract. Locke identifies specific conditions that justify revolution, primarily focusing on tyranny and the abuse of power. Tyranny, in Locke's view, occurs when a leader or government exceeds its legitimate authority and acts arbitrarily, violating the natural rights of the people. Such actions constitute a breach of the social contract and legitimize resistance

However, Locke argued that this social contract wasn't a long-lasting surrender of power. If the government violated the natural rights it was supposed to protect, it breached the social contract. This could take various forms, like arbitrary laws that threatened life, taking away individual freedoms without justification, or failing to protect property rights. By violating these fundamental rights, the government essentially broke the agreement with the people, and therefore, forfeited its legitimacy. This lays the groundwork for the right to resist, which gives the people the ability to rebel against a government that is no longer acting in their best interests and is not carrying out its fundamental obligations.

In general, here are the key and the basic conditions that John Locke identifies as justifying revolution:

- **Violation of Natural Rights:** A government loses legitimacy when it violates people's fundamental rights to life, liberty, and property. According to Locke, the main goal of government is to protect fundamental rights, and any violation on this obligation justifies opposition. People willingly give up some of their inherent rights in order to establish a

government that is charged with defending those rights. A government is seen to have broken the social contract if it does not fulfill this duty and instead threatens these rights. This violation of the social contract has further consequences: first, the government loss of legitimacy. Locke believed that the consent of the governed is what gives a government its legitimacy. This consent is granted in light of the government's pledge to uphold people absolute rights. A government that betrays this pledge betrays the foundation of its legitimacy. Consequently, the legitimacy of a government is lost when it undermines basic rights. Second, it strengthens the justification for rebellion and the right to resist. According to Locke, people have the right to rebel when a government disobeys the social contract and loses its legitimacy. There are many different ways to resist, ranging from nonviolent protest to revolution. It is believed that the people's right to defend their inherent rights naturally extends to the right to resist. Locke thought that when an oppressive ruler threatens someone's life, liberty, or property, it is appropriate to rebel against them. According to him, the people have the right and the obligation to overthrow a government when it starts to jeopardize the same liberties it was established to defend.

- **Arbitrary Rule and Dictatorship:** Locke opposes arbitrary rule, which is when a ruler acts without consulting the people or the law. Dictatorial acts are considered as blatant breaches of the social contract, such as enforcing laws without the permission of the general population or employing force to control protest.
- **Failure to Protect the Common Good:** Governments have a moral duty to act in the best interests of the people. When they don't, whether intentionally or unintentionally, they lose their moral authority. This can take many different forms, like misbehavior, corruption, or policies that negatively impact people's welfare.

Locke emphasizes that resistance is not justified by minor grievances but by substantial and persistent abuses that threaten the fundamental rights and well-being of the populace. The decision to resist must be a collective judgment, reflecting the consensus of the community that the government has irrevocably breached the social contract.(Hindess, Barry. 2007)

2.3. John Locke's criteria for revolution and resistance

In his landmark work *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), John Locke maintained that the people had the right to rebel against and destroy a government that transgressed the social compact and natural law. He delineated a series of tenets and prerequisites that must be fulfilled in order to legitimize revolt and opposition. These standards guarantee that such activities are morally acceptable and based on the defense of basic rights. Locke's principles of Revolution and Resistance include:

- ✚ **Breach of Trust by the Government:** The legitimate government must have committed and participated in a serious violation on the social contract. This happens when the government power acts tyrannically, arbitrarily, or oppressively, invading upon the natural rights of the people. Such breaks show a failure to maintain the social contract.
- ✚ **Exhaustion of Peaceful and Legal Remedies:** Before advocating to revolution or resistance, the people must have first tried to address their objections through peaceful and legal options includes petitions, public appeals, and negotiations, or seeking justice from higher authorities or the international community. Only when these options are fully exhausted can revolution be morally justified.
- ✚ **Consent of the Majority:** John Locke underlines that revolution cannot be rise or start based on the will of a minority or driven by individual interests, or emotional desires. Instead, it must be an action supported by the majority of the people, showing their collective need to resist tyranny. This confirms that resistance is aimed at the common good and not motivated by simple reason and grievance.
- ✚ **Aims to Restore a Just and Lawful Government:** The main objectives of resistance and revolution must not be the search of power by any particular group. Rather than, it should aim at the establishment of a government that is lawful and accountable to the people. Such a government must protect the natural rights of individuals, obey to the rule of law, and operate with the consent of the governed.
- ✚ **Proportionality and Minimization of Violence:** Locke argues that while force may be necessary in a revolution, it must be balanced to the injustices action. The use of violence should be reduced and unnecessary bloodshed and destruction must be removed. This

activity ensures that resistance and revolution does not lead into chaos, but remains focused on restoring order and justice.

The summary above accurately captures the key elements of Locke's principles for revolution and resistance. These principles have significantly shaped political thought and have been used to justify resistance movements worldwide, including in Ethiopia. In the following sections, in the next section I try to explain how these principles have been applied to understand and justify resistance movements in Ethiopia's context.

2.4. Limitations and Challenges of Locke's Right to Revolution in Ethiopia

John Locke's theory of the right to revolution offers a compelling framework for analyzing political legitimacy and justifying resistance. However, its practical application in non-Western contexts like Ethiopia presents several challenges.

- ✚ **Cultural Differences in the Concept of Natural Rights:** Locke's emphasis on individual rights to life, liberty, and property reflects Western liberal values that may not resonate universally. In Ethiopia, communal rights and collective well-being often take precedence (Merera, 2003), making it difficult to directly apply Locke's framework. This raises questions about whether Locke's individualistic focus can adequately address the collective needs of non-Western societies.
- ✚ **Diverse and Multiethnic Societies:** Locke's theory assumes a relatively homogeneous society where the consent of the governed is easily determined. In diverse and multiethnic societies like Ethiopia, reaching consensus on the legitimacy of resistance can be challenging. Ethnic and regional distinctions may lead to differing perspectives on political legitimacy and the basis for resistance, complicating the application of Locke's principles.
- ✚ **Blurred Distinction between Legitimate and Illegitimate Authority:** Locke's model hinges on a clear distinction between legitimate and illegitimate authority, which is often difficult to ascertain in practice. Many governments, including Ethiopia's, exhibit both legitimate and illegitimate traits, making it controversial to determine when resistance is justified. Locke's theory lacks the nuance needed to account for these mixed realities.

- ✚ **Legitimacy and Authority to Initiate Resistance:** Another significant challenge is determining who has the authority to decide when resistance is justified. Locke's theory does not provide a definitive answer, leading to potential power struggles and confusion. Additionally, recognizing the existence of a resistance movement can be challenging, as different factions may claim to represent the people's will.
- ✚ **Unpredictability and Instability of Revolutions:** Revolutions often result in unpredictability, violence, and instability. Locke's theory does not fully address these risks or offer concrete solutions for building a fair and stable system after the fall of a tyrannical regime.

Despite these challenges, Locke's theories have had a significant impact on revolutionary movements worldwide, including in Ethiopia. His emphasis on natural rights, consent of the governed, and the right to revolt provided a philosophical foundation for numerous historical uprisings. While adaptations may be necessary due to Ethiopia's unique social and cultural context, Locke's work offers a valuable framework for understanding resistance to perceived tyranny.

To sum up, while Locke's concept of the right to revolution offers valuable insights into political legitimacy and resistance, its application to the Ethiopian context must carefully consider cultural, social, and historical factors. By understanding the limitations and challenges of Locke's theory, we can more effectively evaluate its relevance and applicability to Ethiopian resistance movements.

Chapter Three

3. The Ethiopian Social Contract and the Dynamics of Revolutions

Building on the discussion of the idea in Chapter 2, this chapter considers the application of John Locke's social contract theory in the Ethiopian context. It analyzes the governance and a natural right in Ethiopia, examines historical examples of social contracts and resistance movements, and considers the strengths and limitations of Locke's framework when applied to Ethiopian resistance and revolutions movement.

3.1. The Ethiopian Governance and Natural Rights

Ethiopia's tradition of governance and its conception of inherent rights are deeply intertwined with its rich historical and cultural heritage. Unlike many African nations, Ethiopia's successful resistance to European colonization preserved its sovereignty, profoundly shaping its social contract and conceptions of resistance.

Historically, Ethiopia's governance was decentralized, with regional lords and local chiefs wielding considerable autonomy. This fostered a sense of communal rights and responsibilities, grounding the Ethiopian social contract in collective well-being rather than individual autonomy. This contrasts with Western liberal traditions, where individual rights are often prioritized. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church played a significant role in shaping the country's political and social life (Tronvoll, K 2009). More than a religious institution, it was a moral and political force, promoting justice, solidarity, and resistance to oppression. The Church emphasized rulers' moral obligation to uphold justice, reinforcing the idea that governance is a sacred trust. When rulers violated this trust, resistance was seen as a moral imperative.

The Church's influence, combined with decentralized governance, created a framework in which the people's inherent rights were viewed as collective entitlements to justice and self-determination rather than merely individual liberties (Markakis 2011). This social and cultural milieu provides fertile ground for understanding Ethiopia's unique interpretation of natural rights and the right to resist. Resistance in Ethiopia was often framed not as an assertion of individual freedoms but as a defense of the community's moral and political integrity against tyrannical rulers.

These elements resistance to colonization, decentralized governance and the Church's influence form the foundation for Ethiopia's distinctive conception of the social contract. Unlike the more individualistic models of the West, Ethiopia's conception emphasizes communal values, shared responsibilities, and a collective approach to resistance against injustice. Understanding this broader historical and cultural context is essential for fully appreciating Ethiopia's unique contribution to the discourse on natural rights and the legitimacy of governance.

3.2. Historical Examples of Social Contracts and Resistance in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's history offers numerous examples of social contracts and resistance movements, underscoring the people's unwavering dedication to principles of self-governance and justice. One of the most significant periods in this regard is the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, a turning point that not only exemplifies the power of collective resistance but also highlights the reconstitution of Ethiopia's social contract.

Emperor Haile Selassie's reign (1930-1974) was marked by efforts toward modernization, including the introduction of the 1931 Constitution. However, the political system remained largely autocratic, with the Emperor retaining overwhelming control (Teshale, 2012). This lack of genuine power-sharing directly violated what John Locke conceptualized as the foundation of legitimate political authority the consent of the governed. In Locke's framework, political power must rest on the explicit or tacit consent of the people, and any breach of this fundamental principle justifies resistance.

The tensions between Haile Selassie's modernization efforts and the persistence of autocratic rule exposed a disconnect between the state's narrative of progress and the people's lived reality. While the nation united against external threats, internal governance remained a source of discontent (Teshale, 2012). Haile Selassie's resistance to foreign invasion embodied Ethiopia's assertion of self-determination a principle central to any legitimate social contract. However, the Emperor's internal governance failed to embody this principle, revealing the limitations of the existing social contract (Halliday, F. and Molyneux 1981).

This internal contradiction the contrast between defending national sovereignty and the absence of internal democratic engagement laid the groundwork for the 1974 revolution. The public's

growing dissatisfaction with political repression, economic inequality, and unaddressed social grievances led to the uprising. The revolution serves as a profound example of how people will assert their right to resist when the social contract is perceived to be violated, seeking to re-establish a system that reflects their collective will. (Tronvoll, 2009).

As we have seen from the above discussion, this historical moment not only illuminates the limits of Haile Selassie's social contract but also demonstrates the Ethiopian people's enduring commitment to reshaping governance in accordance with principles of justice, consent, and self-determination. As Locke argues, when rulers breach the trust placed in them by the governed, resistance becomes a legitimate and necessary response. Ethiopia's 1974 Revolution exemplifies this philosophical principle in action, revealing the profound interplay between political theory and the realities of resistance.

3.2.1. The Derg Regime (1974-1991): A Cruel Ending of the Social Contract, Repression, Resistance, and Revolution

The 1974 overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie by the Derg, a military junta, marked a dramatic political shift and a rupture of the existing social contract. The Marxist-Leninist Derg regime quickly became synonymous with state violence, severe repression, and a disregard for democratic participation (Mulugeta, 2020). Despite attempts to advance social equality through nationalization and dismantling feudalism, the Derg's regime was deeply undermined by human rights abuses, economic mismanagement, and political repression, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and growing resistance (Ottaway, 1978).

The "Red Terror" campaign of the late 1970s epitomizes the brutal character of the Derg's rule, with thousands of alleged political dissidents arrested, tortured, and executed. This era of extreme state violence catalyzed the formation of resistance movements, most notably the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Locke's social contract theory provides a valuable lens for analyzing this resistance, as it underscores the justification for revolution when a government breaches its obligation to protect citizens' rights (Keller, 1988).

The 1974 Revolution and the subsequent resistance movement of 1991 were responses to economic hardship, political repression, and social unrest. The 1974 revolution, marked by mass

mobilization, aimed to end imperial rule and create a more just society (Clapham, 1988). While initially aligned with Locke's principles of resisting tyranny and reasserting popular sovereignty, the Derg's authoritarian practices quickly betrayed these ideals, replacing one form of tyranny with another.

Under Locke's framework, the Derg regime constituted a flagrant violation of the social contract. Locke emphasizes that legitimate governments derive authority from the consent of the governed and are obligated to protect natural rights. The Derg's seizure of power without popular consent, combined with its oppressive policies, represents a breach of these Lockean principles. As Locke argues, when a government fails in its duties, the people have the right to resist and overthrow it. The sustained resistance movements during this period exemplify this right.

Moreover, the collapse of the Derg regime in 1991 and the EPRDF's rise to power represent a critical moment in Ethiopian political history, reflecting the people's desire to reestablish a more inclusive social contract grounded in consent and popular sovereignty. The EPRDF's promise of a federal system aimed at addressing Ethiopia's ethnic diversity and ensuring equitable governance aligns with Lockean principles.

In conclusion, the Derg's repressive rule, far from fulfilling the revolutionary ideals of 1974, instead marked a cruel violation of the social contract. Its fall in 1991, precipitated by the very resistance it provoked, serves as a powerful testament to Locke's theory that when governments act tyrannically, the people have both the right and the moral obligation to resist and reform the social order.

3.2.2. The Post-Derg Era and Contemporary Politics (1991-2021): The EPRDF, Governance, and Recent Protests

The post-Derg era, marked by the rise of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), brought significant political changes, including the implementation of federalism. These reforms aimed to address historical grievances related to ethnic diversity and political exclusion. However, the EPRDF's rule soon revealed authoritarian tendencies, leading to frequent accusations of electoral manipulation, repression, and human rights violations. The government's failure to uphold democratic principles and address ethnic grievances gave rise to

recurrent protests and resistance movements, particularly among marginalized groups (Vaughan, 2011).

The collapse of the Derg regime in 1991 initiated a period of political reimagining. The new government sought to address historical grievances through the establishment of a federal parliamentary republic, officially enshrined in the 1995 Constitution. This Constitution acknowledged Ethiopia's ethnic diversity and introduced federalism as a means of devolving power to the regional states (Mulugeta, 2020). In theory, this new social contract was designed to create a more inclusive and representative political order. However, the practical implementation of this framework has proven to be fraught with challenges, resulting in an ongoing struggle over the distribution of power between the central government and the regions, competition for resources, and persistent ethnic tensions.

The recent conflict in the Tigray region is a stark reminder of the fragility of Ethiopia's federal system and highlights the unresolved tensions in defining a social contract that adequately respects the rights and aspirations of all Ethiopians (Mulugeta, 2020). Similarly, the Oromo protests, which erupted in 2015, underscore the deep-rooted demand for political reform and social justice. These protests, primarily driven by grievances related to land rights, political marginalization, and state repression, reflect a broader dissatisfaction with the EPRDF's governance model. The Oromo protests, along with other resistance movements, resonate profoundly with Locke's concept of the right to resist a government that breaches the social contract.

In Locke's framework, the right to resist emerges when the government fails to fulfill its duties to protect the natural rights of its citizens life, liberty, and property—thereby forfeiting its legitimacy. The protests and uprisings of the post-Derg era, including the resistance against the Derg itself and more recent movements, reflect this principle in action. Whether during the fall of Haile Selassie, the overthrow of the Derg, or the contemporary protests against the EPRDF, the Ethiopian people's recurring resistance can be understood through Locke's theory as a legitimate response to the perceived breach of their social contract by successive regimes.

The ongoing tension in Ethiopian politics underscores the enduring relevance of Locke's theory of resistance. While the EPRDF's federal reforms sought to address past failures, their inability

to construct a truly inclusive and democratic governance structure has led to continued unrest. The social contract in Ethiopia remains a work in progress, with its people repeatedly asserting their Lockean right to resist oppression and demand a government that represents their collective will.

3.3. Major Case Studies

3.3.1. Revolution and the Social Contract in Practice

The examination of revolutionary and resistance movements in Ethiopia provides significant insights into the practical challenges of applying John Lock principles in real-world contexts. By analyzing key historical movements, we can observe the complexities involved in the dissolution and reformation of the social contract. In this regard, I will focus on two fundamental case studies, the first being the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974.

3.3.2. Case Study 1: The Ethiopian Revolution of 1974

The Ethiopian Revolution of 1974, which culminated in the overthrow of the monarchy, initially resonated with Lockean ideals, particularly in its aspirations for a more democratic and representative form of governance. At its inception, the revolution embodied a rejection of autocratic rule and a call for a political order based on consent and the protection of natural rights (Andargachew Tiruneh. 1990) . However, the subsequent rise of the Derg regime revealed the profound challenges inherent in transitioning from a centralized monarchy to a political system that reflects Lockean principles of limited government and individual rights (Marcus, 2002).

- **Key Actors:** Emperor Haile Selassie (monarch) (Bahru, 1991), The Derg military junta led by Mengistu Haile Mariam (Gilkes, 1975), Student movements, and Intellectuals (Gilkes, 1975)
- **Events:** the military coup that deposed Emperor Haile Selassie, growing public discontent due to widespread poverty, corruption, and famine (Andargachew Tiruneh. 1990) the Derg's consolidation of power through violence and repression, and student protests (Gilkes, 1975).

- **Outcome:** The monarchy was overthrown, and a socialist state was established. However, the Derg's authoritarian regime eventually incited further uprisings and unrest (Gilkes, 1975, Andargachew Tiruneh. 1990)

Analysis: This case study illustrates the stark contrast between Locke's theoretical framework and the practical realities of revolutionary change. While the revolution initially aligned with Locke's vision of legitimate resistance, the Derg's subsequent actions betrayed these ideals. The Derg's rise to power, characterized by authoritarian governance, disregard for natural rights, and violence, diverged from Locke's notion of a legitimate government, which is fundamentally premised on the consent of the governed and the protection of individual liberties.

The revolution, while attempting to rectify the concentration of power and inequities under Haile Selassie's rule, highlights the inherent tensions in revolutionary movements (Clapham, C 1988). The initial drive for justice, inspired by the breach of the social contract, can often give way to new forms of authoritarianism if the necessary structures for accountable governance are not established. This mirrors Locke's concern that the dissolution of one illegitimate government may not necessarily lead to a more just and representative order.

From the above my analysis and understanding, the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 provides a concrete example of the complex relationship between revolution and the social contract. It demonstrates the challenges of transitioning from despotism to a more representative political system, particularly when revolutionary forces fail to adhere to the lockes ideals that initially concerned the movement. The Derg regime's actions serve as a cautionary tale about the difficulty of ensuring that revolutionary movements genuinely uphold the principles of natural rights, consent, and legitimate authority.

The Ethiopia Revolution and its Connection to John Lock Theory:

The uprising against the monarchy can be seen as a response to a government failing to uphold its obligations under the social contract. Locke argued that the people have the right to resist when a government becomes tyrannical. The Ethiopian people's discontent with the monarchy's failure to address poverty, corruption, and famine aligns with Locke's concept of the right to

resist a tyrannical government that violates the social contract by failing to protect its citizens' well-being.

The revolution's initial goals aligned with Locke's principles of consent of the governed and limitations on state power. The people sought a government that would be more representative and responsive, echoing Locke's emphasis on government derived from the consent of the people. This reflected a desire for a more participatory political system and greater respect for individual rights and freedoms. However, the Derg's authoritarian rule diverged significantly from Lockean principles. The regime's suppression of dissent, disregard for individual rights, and economic mismanagement constituted a flagrant breach of the social contract. This highlights the challenges of ensuring that revolutionary movements genuinely uphold the principles they initially invoke.

Limitations of John Lock Theory in the Ethiopian Context:

Despite the initial John Lock framework statement, the Ethiopian revolution exposed several limitations in applying Locke's theory to the complexities of Ethiopian society. Locke's emphasis on individual rights did not fully account for the complex ethnic dynamics within Ethiopian society. The revolution did not immediately address the historical marginalization of certain ethnic groups, leading to ongoing grievances. Additionally, Locke's framework also underestimates the difficulties of transitioning from a tyrannical regime to a more just and representative government. While Locke champions the right to resist tyranny, he provides little guidance on the complexities of establishing a stable, rights-respecting government after the fall of the old regime. The rise of the Derg after the revolution exemplifies this limitation. The transition from monarchy to military rule was marked not by the establishment of a democratic or participatory government but by further authoritarianism, illustrating the challenges inherent in revolutionary transitions. Finally, the Ethiopian Revolution highlights the tension between revolutionary ideals and the practical realities of power struggles and unintended consequences.

The revolution action initially fulfilled with John Lock social contract philosophy by promising:

The revolution was driven by a demand for a government that would genuinely listen to and address the grievances of the people (Warr. M. 1979). This reflects Locke's core principle that legitimate governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed. Ethiopians, particularly students, workers, and intellectuals, called for an end to autocratic rule and for a more inclusive political system that respected their voices.

Additionally, Locke's theory of natural rights includes the state's duty to protect the rights to life, liberty, and property. In Ethiopia, extreme economic inequalities and entrenched poverty were central drivers of the revolution. The promises of the revolutionary movement, which sought to address these inequalities, appeared to echo Locke's vision of a government that ensures the welfare of its people.

However, the Derg's subsequent actions diverged significantly from John Lock principles. During that time, rather than promoting political participation and freedom, the Derg regime brutally suppressed opposition voices, violating Locke's concept of the right to resist tyranny. The Red Terror campaign, marked by arbitrary arrests, torture, and executions, demonstrated the regime's willingness to consolidate power at any cost, undermining the very principles of liberty and consent that the revolution had initially invoked (Dawit Wolde 1989). However, the Derg's authoritarianism stood in direct contradiction to Locke's emphasis on protecting fundamental liberties. The widespread human rights abuses perpetrated by the regime, including the targeting of political opponents and the denial of basic freedoms, starkly contrasted with Locke's vision of a government bound by the rule of law and dedicated to safeguarding the natural rights of its citizens.

In this context, Locke's theory, while offering a powerful philosophical framework for understanding the legitimacy of resistance, does not fully anticipate the practical difficulties of revolution. The Ethiopian experience highlights that without a careful balance between consent, accountability, and respect for individual rights, revolutions risk replicating the very forms of oppression they seek to dismantle.

3.3.3. Case Study 2: The Uprising against the Derg Regime (1974-1991)

This case study illustrates the application of Locke's concept of the right to resist a government that deliberately violates the social contract. The Derg regime's extensive human rights abuses, suppression of political dissent, and the authoritarian consolidation of power created conditions ripe for justified resistance according to John Lock principles. However, the diverse ethnic composition of the resistance raises critical questions about how a social contract can be constructed to represent the plural interests within Ethiopia's complex society (Donham, 1999).

In the case of the Derg, whose reign was marked by brutal repression, political purges, and systemic violence, the government's breach of the social contract was undeniable. Yet, the uprising against the Derg also exposes the limitations of Locke's theory when applied to a multiethnic state like Ethiopia. While Locke's emphasis on consent and the protection of individual rights resonated with the Ethiopian desire for democratic reform, the diverse ethnic groups involved in the resistance posed challenges that Locke's framework does not fully address.

- **Key Actors:** The Derg regime, ethnic-based resistance movements such as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), and student groups who played pivotal roles in mobilizing dissent (Donham, 1999).
- **Events:** The Derg's extensive human rights violations and suppression of dissent led to the formation of various resistance movements, often along ethnic lines. This resulted in a protracted armed conflict, with both domestic and international actors becoming involved (Donham, 1999).
- **Outcome:** The eventual downfall of the Derg regime in 1991, after years of armed struggle, and the establishment of a federal republic in Ethiopia aimed at addressing ethnic diversity and decentralizing power (Marcus, 2002).

Analysis: The resistance against the Derg regime serves as a powerful illustration of Locke's notion of the right to resist a government that grossly violates the social contract. Under the Derg's reign, the systematic violation of human rights—ranging from mass executions and torture to the stifling of political opposition—constituted a fundamental breach of Locke's

principles, which hold that a government's legitimacy is contingent upon its protection of the people's rights. In this regard, the resistance movement was philosophically justified under Locke's theory, as it sought to overthrow a government that had not only failed to protect the common good but had actively undermined it.

However, the uprising also illuminates the complexities of applying Locke's theory within the Ethiopian context. Locke's social contract assumes a relatively homogenous citizenry, bound by shared interests and values. Ethiopia, by contrast, is a deeply diverse society, with a history of ethnic tensions and competing regional interests. The formation of ethnic-based resistance movements such as the TPLF and EPLF underscores the need for a social contract that goes beyond Locke's focus on individual rights and consent to include a clear understanding of ethnic pluralism and the distribution of power across different groups.

The transition from the Derg regime to a federal republic in 1991 reflects an attempt to construct a new social contract that would acknowledge and address these ethnic divisions. Yet, even with the establishment of federalism, the ongoing tensions between Ethiopia's central government and its regional states illustrate the challenges of creating a truly inclusive political order in a multiethnic society. Locke's framework, while useful for justifying the overthrow of tyrannical regimes, offers limited guidance on how to structure a political system that balances the interests of diverse ethnic groups and ensures equitable distribution of power and resources.

John Locke and the Revolution against the Derg:

The uprising against the Derg aligns closely with Locke's theory of the right to resist tyrannical governments. In Locke's view, a government that fails to secure the natural rights of its citizens, or that actively harms their well-being, loses its legitimacy and may be justly resisted. The Derg's repression, which included mass killings, arbitrary detentions, and the silencing of dissent, clearly violated the basic principles of Locke's social contract, justifying the various resistance movements that emerged in response.

The emergence of ethnically-organized resistance movements, such as the TPLF and EPLF, highlights a critical gap in Locke's theory. Locke's model of the social contract does not adequately account for the realities of deeply divided societies where ethnic identity plays a

significant role in shaping political allegiances and demands. The Ethiopian case underscores the need for a social contract that not only protects individual rights but also addresses the collective aspirations and grievances of different ethnic groups. This raises important questions about how Locke's theory might be adapted or expanded to better serve the needs of a pluralistic society.

Limitations of Lockean Theory in the context:

The uprising against the Derg regime illustrates both the relevance and the limitations of Locke's social contract theory in the Ethiopian context. Locke's theory is primarily concerned with protecting individual rights and securing the consent of the governed. However, in Ethiopia, where ethnic identity often determines access to political power and resources, Locke's focus on the individual can overlook the collective rights and interests of different ethnic groups. The ongoing struggles over resource allocation and political representation in Ethiopia demonstrate that a more complex and multi-layered approach to the social contract is necessary in such contexts.

In addition to the above limitation, Locke envisioned a government that operates with the consent of the people, but his theory assumes a more centralized form of governance. Ethiopia's adoption of federalism after the fall of the Derg reflects an effort to create a social contract that devolves power to regional states and addresses ethnic diversity. Yet, the tensions between Ethiopia's central and regional governments suggest that Locke's emphasis on consent and limited government requires adaptation to address the challenges of governing a multiethnic federation.

In sum, the uprising against the Derg regime demonstrates the enduring relevance of Locke's concept of the right to resist tyrannical governments, but it also reveals the limitations of applying his theory in its original form to a diverse and divided society like Ethiopia. The Ethiopian case suggests that for Locke's ideas to be fully effective in such contexts, they must be expanded to account for the complexities of ethnicity, federalism, and collective rights in addition to individual liberties. This case, therefore, offers a critical reflection on the adaptability of John Lock thought in the face of modern challenges to the social contract.

3.4. Applying Locke's Framework to Ethiopian Revolutions: Strengths and Insights

The application of John Locke's social contract theory to the Ethiopian revolutions offers a profound lens through which to examine the principles of legitimate government, the causes of resistance, and the conditions under which revolution is justified. Locke's notion of the right to resist a government that fails to protect the natural rights of its people resonates with the dynamics of political upheaval in Ethiopia. Yet, a perfect application of his theory is necessary to avoid oversimplifying the complexities of Ethiopian society, especially when distinguishing between legitimate resistance to oppression and separatist movements that could jeopardize the unity of the Ethiopian state.

In the Ethiopian context, the challenge lies in balancing the protection of individual and group rights with the preservation of national unity. While Locke's social contract was developed in a very different historical and cultural setting, his core principles offer valuable insights into Ethiopia's ongoing pursuit of a just and stable political order. Locke's ideas about the consent of the governed, the protection of natural rights, and the limitations on governmental power are critical components in the establishment of a legitimate and accountable state. However, their application must be sensitive to Ethiopia's unique ethnic diversity and political history.

One of the key strengths of Locke's framework is its emphasis on natural rights and the consent of the governed. These principles are particularly relevant in Ethiopia, where successive regimes both monarchic and revolutionary have consistently violated the social contract by suppressing rights, repressing dissent, and failing to promote the common good. The 1974 revolution that overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie, as well as the resistance against the Derg regime, can be understood through this Lockean lens. In both cases, the collective judgment of the people was that their rulers had become tyrannical, infringing on their natural rights, and therefore had forfeited their legitimacy.

Locke's theory not only justifies the right to resist but also places ethical and rational limits on that resistance. This is an aspect of his philosophy that resonates with Ethiopia's long-standing tradition of seeking justice and self-determination. The principle that resistance must be

grounded in reason and a genuine concern for the protection of rights, rather than in mere power struggles or opportunism, is deeply relevant in a society marked by ethnic tensions and political divisions. Locke's ideas emphasize that legitimate resistance is a moral act, aimed at restoring the social contract rather than merely disrupting it.

Furthermore, Locke's philosophy transcends its Western origins and can be adapted to non-Western contexts like Ethiopia. The Ethiopian revolutions demonstrate that the desire to defend inalienable rights and to challenge arbitrary authority is not exclusive to Western political thought. The Ethiopian people, in their historical struggles against oppressive regimes, reflect Locke's vision of a society where the people retain the ultimate right to judge when their government has violated the social contract. This demonstrates the universality of Locke's core principles, even in societies with different cultural and historical foundations.

However, Locke's framework must be carefully adapted to Ethiopia's specific context, particularly its ethnic diversity. Locke's emphasis on individual rights and the consent of the governed does not fully account for the challenges of creating a political system in a multiethnic state. In Ethiopia, where political power and resources are often contested along ethnic lines, the social contract must address not only individual rights but also collective rights and interests. The principles of federalism and decentralization, which were introduced following the fall of the Derg regime, can be seen as attempts to create a social contract that is more inclusive and reflective of Ethiopia's ethnic plurality. Still, the ongoing tensions over resource distribution and political representation suggest that the application of Locke's ideas requires further refinement in this context.

In conclusion, Locke's social contract theory offers valuable insights for understanding the causes and conditions of resistance in Ethiopia, as well as the principles of legitimate government. His emphasis on the protection of natural rights and the consent of the governed remains crucial in the Ethiopian pursuit of justice and stability. Yet, Locke's framework also requires careful adaptation to the Ethiopian context, particularly in its treatment of ethnic diversity and collective rights. By applying Locke's ideas with an understanding of Ethiopia's unique historical and social conditions, we can better grasp the complex dynamics of revolution, resistance, and the search for a just political order in the country.

3.5. Limitations of Locke's Framework in Understanding Ethiopian Revolutions

Despite the strengths of John Locke's social contract theory, significant limitations arise when attempting to apply it to the Ethiopian context. These limitations stem from both theoretical and practical discrepancies, reflecting the Western-centric nature of Locke's ideas and their divergence from the complex realities of Ethiopian political and social life.

One of the key limitations is Locke's focus on individual rights, which contrasts sharply with the communal and collective values that underpin Ethiopian political culture. Ethiopian society, as illustrated by systems like the *gada* among the Oromo people, places a high priority on communal harmony, social cohesion, and the collective well-being of the group over the autonomy of the individual. The *gada* system, a rotating leadership structure based on age grades, emphasizes shared responsibility and community welfare, which can be at odds with Locke's individualistic framework. For Locke, the core of the social contract is the protection of individual natural rights—life, liberty, and property. However, in Ethiopia, the notion of rights is often framed within the context of the community, where the stability and survival of the group are paramount.

This tension becomes particularly evident in the context of modern resistance movements, such as the Oromo protests of 2015. These protests were sparked by a combination of political marginalization and human rights abuses, but the grievances expressed were deeply rooted in the collective identity and historical experiences of the Oromo people. The *gada* system's emphasis on collective well-being played a crucial role in shaping the resistance. The Oromo demanded not just the protection of individual rights but also recognition of their collective rights and the need for an inclusive political system that respects their communal identity. Locke's focus on individual rights, while valuable, does not fully capture these dimensions of the struggle, illustrating the limitations of directly applying his framework to Ethiopian resistance movements.

Another significant limitation of Locke's theory is its presumption of a unified consensus among the people regarding the legitimacy of resistance and revolution. Locke's model assumes that the governed can collectively assess whether the government has breached the social contract and, if

necessary, justify resistance. However, in Ethiopia, the ethnic and regional diversity complicates this assumption. The Ethiopian landscape is a mosaic of ethnic groups with distinct historical experiences, political aspirations, and perceptions of legitimacy. As a result, consensus on the need for resistance is far from straightforward. For instance, contemporary protests often reflect diverging views among various ethnic groups, making it difficult to achieve a unified revolutionary agenda. The Oromo protests, the Tigray conflict, and other resistance movements illustrate how ethnic and regional divisions complicate Locke's notion of a single, unified response to governmental tyranny.

Moreover, Locke's theory does not fully account for the risks and uncertainties associated with implementing the right to revolution in a complex political landscape like Ethiopia's. Ethiopia's modern history shows that revolutions often lead to prolonged instability, violence, and unintended consequences. The fall of the monarchy in 1974, the overthrow of the Derg regime in 1991, and the ongoing political turbulence all point to the cyclical nature of repression and resistance in the country. While Locke's right to revolution provides a useful framework for understanding the moral justification for resistance, the Ethiopian experience highlights the difficulty of establishing a stable and just political order solely through revolutionary means. Revolutions often give rise to new forms of repression, as seen in the authoritarian rule of the Derg following the 1974 revolution. This suggests that Locke's theory, while helpful in identifying when governments lose legitimacy, does not adequately address the challenges of post-revolutionary governance and the risks of political fragmentation and continued conflict.

To fully grasp the dynamics of resistance and revolution in Ethiopia, it is essential to recognize the limitations of Locke's framework and to incorporate the unique features of Ethiopian political culture. Locke's theory, rooted in Western individualism, requires significant adaptation to address the communal and multi-ethnic nature of Ethiopian society. While Locke's ideas about consent, natural rights, and the right to resist remain valuable for understanding the moral and philosophical justifications for resistance, they must be contextualized within Ethiopia's specific historical and cultural realities.

In conclusion, Locke's social contract theory provides a valuable lens through which to understand the principles of legitimate government and justified resistance in Ethiopia. However,

its Western-centric focus on individual rights and its assumption of a unified populace limit its direct applicability. To fully understand resistance movements and the pursuit of a just social contract in Ethiopia, Locke's framework must be adapted to account for the communal, multi-ethnic, and historically complex nature of Ethiopian political life. This contextualized approach will provide a clearer and more clear understanding of Ethiopia's ongoing struggle for justice, stability, and political inclusivity.

Chapter Four

4. Legitimacy, Morality, and Effectiveness of Resistance in Ethiopia

John Locke's social contract theory provides a framework for assessing the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of resistance movements. While Locke emphasized individual rights, the Ethiopian context requires considering communal rights and the historical legacy of oppression.

According to Locke, legitimate governments are established by the agreement of the governed and have a fundamental responsibility to protect their citizens' natural rights, which include the rights to life, liberty, and property. People not only have the right but also the moral duty to fight and overturn a government that disobeys this duty and breaches these rights.

Building upon John Locke's social contract theory and its application to Ethiopian revolutions, this chapter looks at the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of resistance movements in Ethiopia. I try to analyze how Locke's concepts translate to the specific socio-political landscape of the country, addressing the criteria for just cause and legitimate authority, the ethical dilemmas faced during resistance, and the challenges of changing to a stable social order.

4.1. Legitimacy of Resistance: Identifying Just Cause in the Ethiopia Context and Defining Authority

Locke's theory of resistance is based on the idea that it is legitimate to revolt against governments that fail to uphold the natural rights of their citizens, thereby violating the social compact. But in Ethiopia, the idea of legitimate opposition needs to take into consideration the community aspects of power and rights, which are fundamental to the country's political culture. Locke focused on the defense of individual rights as the cornerstone of a just cause, but the Ethiopian experience adds other factors that affect the legitimacy of resistance.

Locke's concept of reasonable cause, which is mainly focused on breaches of property, life, and liberty, is relevant but falls short of describing the situation in Ethiopia. Ethiopian resistance has always been motivated by the dismantling of social institutions, marginalization of ethnic groups, oppression within communities, and violations of individual rights.

4.1.1. Criteria for Just Cause in the Ethiopian Context:

- **Violation of Natural Rights:** The Derg regime's human rights abuses and suppression of dissent constituted a clear breach of the social contract, justifying resistance. According to Locke's philosophy, resistance is justified when the government fails to uphold citizens' natural rights—life, liberty, and property. Ethiopian history demonstrates this idea, especially during the Derg government, when continuous violations of human rights, mass executions, and political repression produced a strong moral case for insurrection. A notable example of how these fundamental rights were violated during the Derg's "Red Terror" campaign in the 1970s is that it gave legitimacy to the resistance forces that sprang up in reaction (Keller, 1988).
- **Respect for Communal Rights:** Resistance movements in Ethiopia often defended marginalized ethnic groups, highlighting the importance of addressing collective rights and well-being. Locke places a significant emphasis on individual rights, whereas the Ethiopian social contract places a strong emphasis on the welfare of the community. Individual autonomy is frequently subordinated to the welfare of the group in Ethiopian society. Ethiopia has seen a number of resistance movements spring up in support of oppressed ethnic groups whose traditional institutions and collective rights were being threatened. For example, the Oromo protests of 2015 were not only about individual rights violations, but also about the political and economic marginalization of the Oromo people as a community. The demonstrations made clear that more communal complaints need to be addressed, implying that Locke's framework needs to be modified to take Ethiopia's collective well-being into account.
- **Historical Legacy of Oppression:** Ethiopia's history of authoritarianism and inequity shaped the understanding of legitimate authority and resistance. Ethiopia's long history of resisting both foreign and domestic oppression has shaped a collective understanding of legitimate authority and resistance. This historical consciousness has often influenced the justification for revolution, even in cases where violations of individual rights were not immediately apparent. The Ethiopian revolution of 1974, which resulted in the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie, was rooted not only in contemporary grievances but also in a

historical legacy of authoritarianism and inequity. In this context, Locke's framework of individual rights needs to be adapted to include a historical perspective on oppression, which legitimizes resistance even when immediate violations of rights are less visible.

- **Breach of Social Contract:** The Derg's and EPRDF's rule undermined the social contract through their oppressive and undemocratic actions. The core of Locke's theory revolves around the social contract—when governments breach the trust and consent of the governed, resistance is justified. In Ethiopia, the prolonged authoritarian rule of both the Derg and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) can be seen as breaches of this contract. The EPRDF's suppression of dissent, electoral fraud, and inability to maintain democratic governance resulted in widespread loss of legitimacy. The breakdown of trust between the government and the people during the EPRDF era provides a clear case of breach of the social contract (Vaughan, 2011), further justifying resistance.

4.2. Morality of Resistance: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas beyond John Lock Principles

Resistance movements have faced significant moral and ethical difficulties throughout history. Although Locke's political philosophy is based on the idea that everyone has the freedom to oppose oppression, actual acts of resistance can have unexpected effects like violence, anarchy, and abuses of human rights. Locke's philosophy upholds the freedom to revolt against oppressive regimes, but it provides less direction for negotiating the moral minefields that resistance organizations must traverse in order to achieve justice. The moral quandaries of resistance in Ethiopia go beyond only rationalizing the use of force. These difficulties include striking a balance between upholding public order and resistance while also making sure that human rights are protected. While Locke's theory provides a foundation for the legitimacy of resistance, the Ethiopian experience highlights the moral dilemmas inherent in resistance movements. These dilemmas include balancing the means and ends of resistance, maintaining public order, and upholding human rights. In the Ethiopian context, these dilemmas go beyond the question of justifying violence.

4.2.1. Ethical Dilemmas in Ethiopian Resistance Movements:

One of the central ethical dilemmas in resistance movements involves the justification of violent means to achieve political goals. In the context of Ethiopia, the armed struggle against the Derg regime provides a stark example of this tension. While Locke might argue that violence is justified when opposing a tyrannical government, the long-term consequences of violence must be carefully considered. Violent resistance often brings about destruction and suffering, and it can undermine the very social order that the movement seeks to establish. As seen in the aftermath of the Derg regime's overthrow, the use of violent means can lead to instability, hindering the establishment of a just and peaceful political order. The moral question then becomes whether the use of violence, even against a repressive regime, can be justified in light of its long-term impact on society (Keller, 1988).

A key ethical challenge for resistance movements is the need to uphold human rights while simultaneously challenging a tyrannical regime. Locke's theory emphasizes the protection of individual rights, but in practice, resistance movements often face the risk of replicating the abuses they are fighting against. This is particularly evident in the Ethiopian context during the Derg's Red Terror campaign, where violent resistance led to widespread human rights abuses. While the initial aim of resistance may have been to overthrow an oppressive government, the methods used by both sides blurred the lines between oppressor and resistor, complicating the moral justification for violence. The challenge for resistance movements is to find ways to resist oppression without perpetuating further human rights violations (Clapham, 1988)

During periods of resistance, maintaining public order is critical to prevent the descent into chaos and to protect the safety of citizens. The Oromo protests of recent years illustrate the tension between legitimate political opposition and the need to avoid widespread disorder. While the protests aimed to address long-standing grievances and demand political reform, they also highlighted the delicate balance between exercising the right to resist and maintaining public order. Locke's framework does not explicitly address the challenges of keeping the peace during resistance, but the Ethiopian experience shows that the breakdown of order can lead to further suffering for ordinary citizens. Resistance movements must navigate the ethical dilemma of how to resist oppression effectively without causing societal breakdown and widespread violence.

To sum up the above concept, the Ethiopian experience demonstrates that the moral challenges of resistance go beyond what Locke's framework directly addresses. While John Lock principles offer a foundation for the legitimacy of resistance, the complexities of maintaining public order, avoiding human rights abuses, and balancing the means and ends of resistance require further ethical consideration.

4.3. Effectiveness of Resistance: Building a New Social Order beyond John Locke's Social Contract

The effectiveness of resistance is not only judged by the overthrow of an oppressive regime, but also by the movement's capacity to build a stable and just social order that upholds the rights of citizens and the principles of the social contract. John Locke's theory emphasizes that successful resistance should lead to the establishment of a government that respects the natural rights of the people. However, the Ethiopian experience of revolution and resistance reveals deeper complexities in achieving such an outcome. Beyond the immediate removal of tyrannical leadership, establishing a new social order that can foster long-term stability, justice, and unity presents significant challenges, especially in the Ethiopian socio-political landscape.

4.3.1. Practical Challenges in Ethiopia:

First, one of the key challenges in post-revolutionary Ethiopia is the political fragmentation that often follows the collapse of an oppressive regime. Resistance movements are frequently composed of diverse groups with varying, and sometimes conflicting, agendas. This lack of cohesion makes it difficult to form a unified vision for governance after the revolution. In Ethiopia, the transition from the Derg regime to the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) was marked by fragmented political factions with differing objectives, leading to ongoing struggles over how to shape the future political landscape (Clapham, 1988). Furthermore, balancing the need for national unity with demands for justice for historical human rights abuses adds another layer of complexity. The tensions between justice and reconciliation raise profound questions about how to move forward as a nation while addressing the legacies of past oppression.

Second, establishing new institutions that foster accountability, transparency, and the rule of law is crucial for a functioning social contract. However, this can be difficult in post-revolutionary contexts. Locke's theory implies that a successful revolution should result in the establishment of institutions that embody the social contract and protect the rights of citizens. However, the practical reality of institution-building in post-revolutionary Ethiopia has proven to be a difficult task. Following the downfall of the Derg, the efforts to create new political, economic, and legal institutions were often undermined by corruption, authoritarian tendencies, and a lack of genuine democratic processes (Vaughan, 2011). The challenge lies not just in replacing one regime with another but in creating institutions that can foster accountability, transparency, and the rule of law principles essential for a functioning social contract. Without these foundations, the effectiveness of resistance remains limited, as it risks perpetuating the cycle of authoritarianism and instability.

The last on in this regard is, Ethiopia's ethnic diversity presents another significant challenge to Locke's model of a singular social contract. His theory envisions a unified social contract between a government and its citizens, based on mutual consent and the protection of individual rights. However, in Ethiopia, the social contract must also account for the collective rights and aspirations of various ethnic groups, each with its own historical grievances and demands for political recognition. The struggle to accommodate ethnic diversity within a new social order has been a persistent challenge, as seen in the tensions between federalism and centralized power structures in Ethiopia. Modifying Locke's emphasis on a singular social contract to reflect the complex reality of Ethiopia's multi-ethnic society may be necessary to achieve a truly inclusive political system. The Oromo protests, for example, highlighted the need for a political framework that respects both individual and collective rights within Ethiopia's diverse society.

To sum up my opinion, the Ethiopian case underscores that the effectiveness of resistance movements cannot be judged solely by their success in overthrowing oppressive regimes. The real measure lies in the ability of these movements to build a new social order that respects the social contract and ensures the protection of rights for all citizens. In Ethiopia, this process is complicated by political fragmentation, the difficulties of institution-building, and the challenge of accommodating ethnic diversity. While Locke's framework provides a valuable foundation for understanding resistance, it must be adapted and expanded to address the specific realities of

Ethiopia's socio-political context. Only by overcoming these challenges can resistance movements effectively contribute to the establishment of a just and lasting social order.

4.4. The Ethiopian Context: Unique Considerations and Ethical Dilemmas

Applying John Locke's concepts of legitimacy, morality, and the effectiveness of resistance within the Ethiopian context brings to light a set of unique challenges and ethical dilemmas. These arise not only from the country's socio-political landscape but also from its historical and cultural dynamics, which complicate the straightforward application of Locke's principles.

4.4.1. Unique Considerations:

First, Ethiopia's ethnic diversity creates significant complications for the notion of a unified social contract. Locke's theory presupposes a relatively homogeneous society bound by shared values and interests. However, Ethiopia's various ethnic groups—each with distinct historical narratives, cultural traditions, and political aspirations—require a more clear approach. The social contract must account for collective rights alongside individual rights, as the marginalization of ethnic groups has historically sparked resistance. This introduces a need for an expanded conception of the social contract that integrates both individual liberties and communal protections (Merera, 2003).

The second issue to be considered is, Ethiopia's long history of resistance against both foreign invaders and domestic oppressors is crucial for understanding contemporary movements. From the resistance against Italian colonization to internal struggles against imperial and authoritarian regimes, Ethiopian political thought has been shaped by a philosophy of self-determination and justice. This historical legacy adds layers to the justification of resistance, as past experiences influence current perceptions of legitimacy and authority. Locke's focus on natural rights provides a foundational framework, but in Ethiopia, the legitimacy of resistance often arises from deeper historical patterns of oppression (Zewde, 2001).

The final point is religion, particularly the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and other religious institutions, has historically played a profound role in shaping Ethiopian political and social life. The moral and ethical teachings of these institutions often inform resistance movements, particularly in terms of justice, authority, and governance. This intertwining of religious and

political thought introduces an additional layer of complexity to Locke's secular framework, as resistance in Ethiopia is often morally justified not just on the grounds of natural rights but also on religious and ethical principles derived from centuries of spiritual tradition (Zewde, 2001).

4.4.2. Ethical Dilemmas:

- **Balancing Tradition and Modernity:** Resistance movements in Ethiopia often navigate the tension between traditional values and modern democratic ideals. Ethiopian resistance movements face the challenge of balancing contemporary political objectives with traditional values. The country's deep-rooted political and social traditions sometimes stand in contrast to modern democratic ideals. Resistance movements must navigate this tension, as embracing modernity often entails challenging entrenched institutions and practices. The dilemma arises when the pursuit of modern governance structures risks alienating traditional communities or disregarding longstanding political systems (Merera, 2003).
- **Justice vs. Reconciliation:** One of the most pressing dilemmas in post-resistance Ethiopia is the balance between justice for past abuses and the need for national reconciliation. Locke's theory emphasizes the restoration of natural rights after a tyrannical regime is overthrown, yet in practice, pursuing justice for historical violations may hinder the process of building a cohesive and stable society. Ethiopia's experiences with transitional justice demonstrate the difficulty of navigating this balance, as demands for accountability often conflict with the imperative to foster unity and prevent further fragmentation (Clapham, 1988).

The application of John Locke's social contract theory in Ethiopia reveals valuable insights and challenges that expand our understanding of the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of resistance movements. While Locke's ideas provide a strong foundation, the Ethiopian context suggests the need for a more flexible and inclusive approach. Several key lessons emerge:

- **Beyond Individual Rights:** Locke's emphasis on individual rights, such as life, liberty, and property, provides a clear justification for resistance when these rights are violated.

However, the Ethiopian case highlights the importance of communal rights and the collective well-being of society. Resistance in Ethiopia has often emerged not only in response to the suppression of individual liberties but also as a reaction to the marginalization of ethnic groups and the erosion of long-standing social and cultural institutions. Thus, any application of Locke's social contract in Ethiopia must take into account the broader communal dimensions of rights and governance.

- **Historical Context Matters:** Ethiopia's history of resistance demonstrates that the legitimacy of opposition to authority is often shaped by long-standing patterns of oppression, even before the widespread violation of natural rights. In Ethiopia, the overthrow of regimes such as Emperor Haile Selassie's monarchy or the Derg's military junta was justified not only by immediate abuses but also by the historical legacy of oppression. This indicates that Locke's theory, which focuses primarily on the violation of individual rights as the catalyst for resistance, could benefit from incorporating a deeper historical understanding of oppression as a driving force behind revolutionary movements.
- **The Challenges of Building a New Social Order:** Locke's theory suggests that successful resistance results in the establishment of a government that upholds the social contract. However, the Ethiopian experience demonstrates the significant challenges involved in building a stable and just social order post-revolution. Political fragmentation, ethnic diversity, and the difficulties of achieving reconciliation all complicate the process of creating a functioning social contract. These challenges raise questions about the long-term effectiveness of resistance movements and the capacity of post-revolutionary governments to uphold the principles of justice and equality.
- **The Morality of Resistance:** Ethiopian resistance movements force us to consider ethical questions that go beyond Locke's justification for resistance. The moral complexities of resistance, particularly the use of violence, must be carefully weighed in light of the broader goal of building a just society. Locke's theory can be enriched by engaging with the ethical dilemmas that arise when resistance movements resort to violence, as these choices often have long-lasting consequences on the moral fabric of the new social order.

To conclude the above idea, the Ethiopian experience of resistance movements illustrates the need to adapt John Locke's social contract theory to account for specific socio-political, cultural, and historical contexts. By doing so, we gain a richer understanding of the factors that contribute to the legitimacy, morality, and effectiveness of resistance movements. Ethiopia's history and diversity challenge the universality of Locke's principles and suggest that successful resistance and the subsequent creation of a just social order requires a more clear and context-sensitive approach. This case also highlights the broader applicability of Locke's ideas beyond their European origins, offering valuable insights into the global discourse on resistance, justice, and political legitimacy. Finally, Locke's theory must be adapted to account for Ethiopia's unique cultural and historical context.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined how John Locke's theory of social contract and the right to revolution might be applied to Ethiopia throughout the country's dramatic political transition from 1974 to 2021. By critically look Locke's political philosophy and analyzing Ethiopia's historical and contemporary experiences with resistance and revolution, my study provided valuable perceptions into the strengths and limitations of using John Locke's philosophical framework to understand and social contract reform and social justice in a non-Western context like my home country Ethiopia.

Reevaluating the Applicability of Locke's Right to Revolution: John Locke and the Ethiopian Experience

My thesis has a clear objective to re-evaluate the applicability of John Locke's theory of the right to revolution to the Ethiopian context. Through a careful close assessment of Ethiopia's historical experiences and political landscape, I have demonstrated how John Locke's framework provides a valuable lens for analyzing resistance movements and the legitimacy of government.

While Locke's theory, grounded in natural law and the consent of the governed, offers a powerful analytical tool, its direct application to Ethiopia presents significant challenges. The country's unique socio-political landscape, characterized by ethnic diversity, historical traditions of self-governance requires a comprehensive understanding that transcends the boundaries of John Locke's original framework of social contract, resistance and revolution concept.

I have presented how John Locke's concepts of a breakdown of the social contract and the loss of legitimacy can be applied to understand the Ethiopian context for justification for resistance against the Derg regime and the EPRDF.

The violation of natural rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property, abuses and repressive policies under the Derg, resonate with Locke's notion of a breach of the social contract, ultimately justifying resistance for the Ethiopian people. Similarly, the prolonged authoritarian rule of the EPRDF, characterized by electoral fraud and suppression of opposition,

represents John Locke's concept of a government that has lost its legitimacy through a blatant disregard for the consent of the governed.

Moving Beyond Locke: Towards a clear Understanding of Resistance in Ethiopia

However, I have also highlighted the significant challenges and limitations in applying Locke's theory directly to the Ethiopia. The country's unique cultural and historical context necessitates a more nuanced approach that incorporates indigenous political philosophies and addresses the specific ethical dilemmas confronted by resistance movements.

While Locke's ideas provide a valuable foundation for analyzing the legitimacy of resistance, they must be adapted to address the specific complexities and ethical dilemmas inherent in Ethiopian society, such as balancing the rights of various ethnic groups and navigating the tension between traditional and modern governance structure. These complexities pose challenges for resistance movements, forcing them to face with ethical dilemmas and practical difficulties during transitions to a new social order.

My thesis backs to the broader discourse on political philosophy by demonstrating the relevance and applicability of Locke's ideas in a non-Western context. It offers a valuable perspective on the enduring significance of Locke's thought in understanding and justifying struggles for political reform and social justice. By bridging Western political thought with Ethiopian experiences, for example, the Oromo protests and other contemporary resistance movements illustrate the importance of integrating traditional values of self-determination and communal justice with modern political ideals like democratic representation.

In general, balancing the search of legitimate political goals with the need to maintain public order and protect human rights remains a persistent challenge. Furthermore, the practical challenges of transitioning from resistance to a stable and just social order require careful consideration of Ethiopia's historical experiences with power struggles and the complexities of building effective and inclusive institutions to continue a peaceful social contract agreement.

Significance of the Thesis and Future Research Directions

Future research directions hold vast potential for further inspiring our understanding of resistance in Ethiopia. The John Locke social contract philosophy theory studies can illuminate the universality and specificities of resistance movements across different countries, while investigations into indigenous political philosophies can offer valuable insights into Ethiopian-specific concepts of governance and justice. Additionally, exploring the policy implications of applying Locke's framework to modern governance challenges in Ethiopia, including issues of federalism, ethnic conflict resolution, and democratization, can present valuable guidance for governors.

In conclusion, while Locke's concept of the right to revolution provides a valuable foundation for analyzing Ethiopian resistance movements, it must be adapted and expanded to fully capture the complexities of the Ethiopian socio-political landscape. My thesis has emphasized the need for a clear understanding that goes beyond a purely Western perspective, recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities presented by Ethiopia's historical and cultural context.

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